AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS EXPLORING THE FOODWORK PRACTICES OF COUPLES ADAPTING TO A SHARED LIFESTYLE

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"Often when you think you're at the end of something, you're at the beginning of something else."

— Fred Rogers

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An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis Exploring the Foodwork Practices of Couples Adapting to a Shared Lifestyle

The goal of this qualitative study was to explore the daily foodwork practices of couples adapting to a shared lifestyle. In-depth interviews, home tours, and photographs were used to gain an understanding of the daily lives of four participant couples. The primary contributions of this research project are the discussion of how couples make sense of their food work responsibilities by describing the division of food-related tasks upon living together and the examination of the development of the role of nutritional gatekeeper. Foodwork was negotiated based on the consideration of past experiences in various other living situations, compared to the present relationship and the partner's attitudes towards food and other domestic work. Negotiations regarding foodwork occur when factors in the relationship change, such as a change in housing, employment, or schedules. The couples all developed a particular negotiation strategy unique to their circumstances to avoid conflict and make foodwork more manageable. The role of nutritional gatekeeper is shared by the couple and even if one person is performing the majority of the feeding work, that work is guided by the preferences of the partner.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The socio-cultural power of food effortlessly influences multiple facets of daily life, to the point that those influences often go unnoticed. Other scholars in food studies have taken note of the influence food and its related activities and have sought to explore seemingly limitless connections food has to gender, politics, behavior, health, and other facets of daily life. The act of eating has been said to be "profoundly social" (DeVault, 1994, p. 35) and has the ability to "sustain[s] social and emotional life as well as physiological (well)being," (DeVault, 1994, p. 35). Belasco (2008, p. 1) gives food the agency to "identify who we are, where we came from, and where we want to be." If food is an integral part of sociality and emotional health in addition to enabling physical well-being, how do we include these socio-cultural aspects of food and eating in our studies of the human condition as it relates to food?

The choices people make about the foods they interact with are entrenched in social relationships that are formed through socialization into cultural systems (Connors et al., 2001; Falk, Bisogni & Sobal, 1996; Furst, Connors, Bisogni, Sobal & Falk, 1996; Murcott, 1998). The kinds of food we eat have short and long term health outcomes, such as weight gain, obesity (The & Gordon-Larsen, 2009), heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. In turn, food selection or preference can have a great impact on social and emotional well-being as well when considering disordered eating, social problems relating to being overweight or obese, or culturally foreign food choices. Benton (2008) cited knowledge of belonging to a cultural group as the single best predictor of food preferences, but did not account for social groupings or familial settings. Ultimately, these choices are expressed as personal preference that is typically personally and culturally constructed through familial and social ties (Connors et al., 2001; Falk et al., 1996).

The American diet is an amalgamation of many cultures and cuisines, and different segments of the population eat in culturally traditional and divergent ways. Examining the multitude of ways in which food plays a role in our social and emotional lives can allow us to understanding the deeper meaning food has to each of us; eating is a universal experience, but the experiences we have with food and eating are not.

It is with this information that one must question what types of social ties influence food-related behaviors, and in what ways those ties have influence. There are seemingly endless ways in which we are socially tied to one another, and different groupings and pairings may have a variety of influences on the ways in which we view food and eating (Anderson, Kemmer & Marshall, 1998; Haworth-Hoeppner, 2000; Kemmer, Anderson & Marshall, 1998; Lee, Cho, Grodstein, Kawachi, Hu & Colditz, 2005; Lee & Kolonel, 1982). Our lives consist of many relationships, places, and spaces, over a lifetime, all of which are mitigating factors in our daily, and habitual, choices. Each relationship, place, space, and moment in time has the potential to affect not only a momentary choice, but can also lead to a development of habits and preferences that can last a lifetime. These lifetime habits are often negotiated during times of change—a change in location, a change in lifestyle, or a change in relationship (Anderson et al., 1998; Kemmer et al., 1998).

One such change is the time during which a person chooses to live with a romantic partner, which is a time that officially marks the beginning of adapting to a shared lifestyle. The purpose of this study is to examine how a change in life course affects the food choices and eating behaviors of people experiencing those changes. Life changes can be viewed as significant personal milestones, such as going to college, having children (Benton, 2008), aging, retirement, and living with a "significant other," such as a spouse, partner, boyfriend or girlfriend (Anderson

et al., 1998; Kemmer et al., 1998; Lee et al., 2005; Kolonel & Lee, 1981; Lee & Kolonel, 1982; Louk, Schafer, Schafer, Dunbar & Keith, 1999; Schafer, Schafer & Keith, 1999).

Any life course changes have the potential to affect the ways in which people view food and eating from that point forward (Devine, Connors, Bisogni & Sobal, 1998; Falk, et al., 2000). By exploring the food-related experiences of cohabiting couples, such as cooking or preparing food in the home, sharing meals, and shopping for food, we can further examine the impact that negotiation process has on overall health and well-being (Bove et al., 2003; Burke, Giangiulio, Billam, Beklin, Houghton & Milligan, 1999; Burkey, Beilin, Dunbar & Kevan, 2004).

The majority of knowledge generated about eating behaviors and food choices has resulted in answers to research questions about what, when, and how much we eat, and the health implications of those decisions. Social influences, specifically the influence of a spouse or partner, are less explored and therefore less understood. This study has the potential to add to a growing body of qualitative literature that examines the cultural and social factors involved in food-related decision making and experiences.

Need for the Study/Significance

An increased focus has been placed on prevention of disease and maintenance of wellness across the life span in public health. One of the major benefits of looking at health and wellness across the life span is one can identify critical times during which major life changes occur and determine if those life changes have implications for health and wellness (Devine et al.,1998; Falk et. al., 2000).

Focusing on eating habits across the lifespan at critical life changes has the potential to provide insights into understanding the relationship between distinctive, memorable chunks of

time denoted by significant, culturally relevant, social change, developments in social context, and changes in population and health and nutritional practices over time.

Because people in our lives have an influence on what we eat (Pachucki, Jacques, & Christakis, 2011), it is necessary then to examine our interpersonal relationships and how those relationships influence food-related behaviors and experiences. There are seemingly endless combinations of the ways in which people can relate (siblings, parent and child, friends, roommates, etc.) but one such pairing is that of romantic partners or spouses. Food choice, with its long-term nutrition and health impacts, makes spousal food negotiations novel to study because a high proportion of foods are eaten with a partner or under the influence of a partner (Stuart & Davis, 1972), but little is known about partnered couples' food behaviors before children are involved in the family dynamic. Gaining a partner, or more specifically, living with that partner, is noted as one of the major life changes that has the potential to influence health behaviors (Devine et al., 1998; Falk et al., 2000). This study focuses on one particular shift in the life course (newly cohabiting), and its potential effects on food-related behaviors and practices and is designed to gain a better understanding of the following research questions:

- Objective: Reach an in-depth understanding of the everyday food experiences of couples who are adapting to a shared lifestyle.
    - RQ1: How do couples make sense of their food work responsibilities upon living together?
        - Describe the food-related experiences of couples adapting to a shared lifestyle.
    - RQ2: How is the role of the nutritional gatekeeper determined in couples who are adapting to a shared lifestyle?

- Describe the experience of determining a nutritional gatekeeper.

Gaps in the Literature

This research aims to address several gaps in the literature regarding the following:

- The use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in qualitative food studies
- Life Course Perspective applied to cohabiting couples
- Qualitative and interdisciplinary studies on food-related behaviors and practices from a non-interventionist perspective
- Less-traditional participants (the inclusion of non-married cohabiting couples)

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

There is a considerable body of work using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) to explore issues in various health settings. These studies include general health and illness issues and experiences such as treatment for kidney failure (Smith, 1996), the experience of chronic fatigue syndrome (Arroll & Senior, 2008), or deciding whether or not to attend a cardiac rehabilitation program (Wyer, Earll, Joseph & Harrison, 2001).

As the corpus of IPA research grows, more and more applications are being discovered. One central theme to most IPA research has been identity, and changes in the life course due to a major life transition resulting in a change in self-identity. Smith's (1994a, 1994b, 1996) early research on identity change during the transition to motherhood shows how IPA has been used longitudinally with an intensive idiographic focus (Smith, 1996). The study collected multiple sources of data from 20 women, including interviews, diaries, and personal accounts and follows the participants over time. Each case was written up as a longitudinal case study that focused on each participant within her own life context, which allowed for the large amounts of rich data to stand on its own. Then, Smith did a cross case analysis that revealed many themes that were not

considered as part of the project's initial research questions. Because of his adherence to IPA principles, specifically the flexible inductive methodology, Smith was able to bring in this theme as a core principle to the shared experiences of the new mothers.

Food choice and consumption is a highly personalized act that can be influenced by significant others (Pachucki et al., 2011). Each person's individual tastes, preferences, preparation techniques—any aspects related to food and eating are like a fingerprint in that no two people share an exact set of influences and preferences. IPA does not intend to make broad claims for groups, for the population at large, or for understanding human behaviors a level beyond an individual case. IPA focuses on an ideographic approach, or a focus on the particulars of participants or cases.

Because of the principles and theory behind IPA, generalizations can be made through an idiographic approach, but those generalizations are grounded in the particular, and can therefore be developed and discussed deliberately and thoughtfully (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 29). Since food-related behaviors and practices can be culturally shared and followed, but are still highly individualized, an approach like IPA that values the individual, the specific, and the particular, is ideal. IPA has already been in use in studies of nutrition education and behavior (Dibsdall, Lambert & Frewer, 2002) where the purpose of the study was to provide an in-depth account of the experiences of a particular group of low-income women in the UK relating to their beliefs and experiences pertaining to food and health. Using IPA, the researchers were able to discover a need for health professionals to consider the different value systems of target groups in determining health promotion policies.

More recently, IPA was used to analyze photos generated by obese teenagers to explore the role of food in family relationships (Lachal et al., 2012). The findings from the study were

used to individually tailor care strategies for the obese teens based on the personal photographs each teenager took of his or her life. Studies using IPA as a framework for data collection and analysis are still relatively uncommon, and this study adds to the growing body of literature featuring IPA as a collection and analysis framework.

Life Course Perspective

Wethington and Johnson-Askew (2009) note that studies using the life course perspective (LCP) typically focuses on the development of chronic disease over time, but studies often neglect to detail the specific contexts in which chronic disease-creating behavioral changes occur. LCP originated in sociology as a powerful organizing framework for the study of health and illness. Because LCP is an ecological approach that emphasizes the role of peer social networks and social activities (Feunekes, Meyboom & van Staveren, 1998; Furst et al., 1996), it is well adept to accounting for key concepts of age, historical time, and timing in the life course when examining food decision making practices in an individual or family.

Wethington (2005) able to theorize the application of LCP to the societal, social, and family contexts which provide the setting for both stability and change in dietary behaviors. In doing so, she identified seven major concepts (*see Chapter 2 for more information on the application of each of the seven major concepts to this study)* that could be used when applying the life course perspective to studies of health and wellness. The seven concepts include trajectories, transitions, turning points, culture and contextual influences, timing in lives, linked lives, and adaptive strategies.Upon cohabiting, behaviors regarding food and eating are part of a daily, developing routine that can be observed using a few of the major concepts of LCP:

- These food negotiations can be seen at every change in life *trajectory*; cohabiting/marriage, the birth of a child, minor adjustments as children grow

older, empty nest, retirement, tragic events, aging, death, etc. (Anderson et al., 1998; Carvalho, Johnson, Kozlosky & Scheimann, 2007; Epstein, Jankowiak, Nederkoorn, Raynor, French & Finkelstein, 2012; Falk et al., 1996, 2000; Kemmer et. al., 1998).

- As each of these events occurs, major *transitions* occur. By looking at the ways in which food is involved in these transitions, we can better understand the role of transitions on food choices, and subsequent health outcomes (Anderson et al., 1998; Kemmer et. al., 1998; Lee et al., 2005)
- Food can be used as lens through which to study the individual and shared *adaptive strategies* the couple develops (Anderson et al., 1998; Furst et al., 1996; Kemmer et. al., 1998)
- Entry into a romantic partnership has been shown to be associated with obesity (The & Gordon-Larsen, 2009). The association was strongest for couples who have *linked lives* by living together for two or more years.

Qualitative and Interdisciplinary Studies

Wethington and Johnson-Askew (2009) determined that more research is needed that focuses on the social networks involved in the food decision making process, and that examining the context of family provides important insights into dietary change. However, Wethington and Johnson-Askew (2009, p. S79) also call for "objectively measured" studies that can be "factored into intervention designs," and miss mentioning the opportunities for, and the benefits of, research on food-related practices that are still focused on society, culture, and family, but are not intervention focused.

A majority of research concerning the life course perspective and dietary behaviors is quantitative in nature (Devine, Wolfe, Frongillo & Bisogni, 1999), but more studies are needed that use interviews and other qualitative methods to link emergent findings to existing theoretical perspectives with the goal of contextualization (Bisgoni, Jastran, Shen & Devine, 2005), rather than jumping from quantitative data collection to planning interventions. To date, most inquiries into spouses or partners changing eating habits upon marriage or cohabiting have been quantitative and/or longitudinal in nature (Pachucki et al., 2011). This study, however, advances our theoretical and practical understanding of the ways in which cohabiting adults adapt to a shared lifestyle, using food as a lens through which to observe those negotiations.

Addressing this gap could lead to a better understanding of the societal and familial contexts in which individuals negotiate food-related behaviors or practices, and thus bridge gaps between research and practice.

Less Traditional Participants

Couples are not often studied as a familial unit separate than that of a family with children. Pachucki et al. (2011) investigated whether eating behaviors were concordant among diverse social and familial groupings. They analyzed the socioeconomic and demographic distribution of eating behaviors among 3,418 members of the Framingham Heart Study (1994-2001) and revealed food and eating practices among four types of peers, including spouses, friends, and siblings. Of the four groupings, spouses showed the strongest adherences to and were the strongest reinforcers of healthy and unhealthy eating patterns over time. The study also determined that certain eating patterns appeared to be "socially transmissible" (Pachucki et al., 2011, p. 275) across varying types of relationships, linking social environment to the types and

amounts of food consumed. For example, alcohol and snacks were the most likely types of foods to be shared between socially connected individuals.

Further, Bove et al. (2003) found that marriage and cohabitation were similar influences regarding how and what romantic partners ate. The majority of discussions over food, shopping, cooking, and eating operated similarly within legal marriages and cohabiting couples. 'Newly married couples' or 'husbands and wives' are often cited as the population of choice when studying food-related behaviors (Anderson et al., 1998; Craig & Truswell, 1988; Kemmer et. al., 1998; Lee & Kolonel, 1982; Louk, Schafer, Schafer & Keith, 1999). Since romantic partners without children are rarely studied as their own unit, studies with unmarried couples, or even cohabiting same-sex couples, are a rarity. There is much potential to investigate diverse couples from various racial and ethnic backgrounds, as well as couples of varying sexual orientations and people in relationships that are an alternative to marriage, going beyond marriage as a key demographic characteristic.

This potential gap is made evident in the body of literature that examines the ways in which couples adjust to changes in the life course. Specifically, there is a body of literature that investigates couples adjusting to living with each other (almost exclusively as heterosexual, married couples):

- Studies that are aimed at understanding the food choices of newly married couples (Bove et al., 2003; Burke et al., 2004; Burke et al., 1999; Craig & Truswell, 1988) have found that when couples share living space, they begin a period of adjustment during which changes in lifestyle are almost always likely to occur, including adjustments to domestic routines.

- While couples are negotiating these lifestyle changes, they are likely to make adjustments to behaviors that may have a substantial influence on their mental and physical health (Bove et al., 2003, Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992; Connors et al., 2001; Coughenour, 1972; Gregory, 1999; Smock, 2000).
- Renegotiation is likely to occur again if another major life event happens. For example, if or when the couple has children, a renegotiation of roles due to schedules, lifestyle, and other familial factors can occur, and can impact the future health of not only the child, but the parents as well (Burke et al.,1999; Schafer, Schafer, Dunbar & Keith, 1999; Smock, 2000).
- Some studies have determined that weight gain may occur for couples after marriage (Kolonel and Lee, 1981; Qian and Tumin, 2011; Swinburn and Egger, 2002), and other still have studied the impact of marriage or cohabiting on eating habits (Devine, 2005; Devine et al., 1998; Devine et al., 1999).

These changes of life course have been studied in terms of their overall impact on health status, but few have examined cohabiting and its effects on more general food-related behaviors from a cultural, interpretative approach, and not solely on food choices or eating behaviors that have a direct impact on morbidity and mortality (Anderson et al., 1998; Kemmer et. al., 1998. In summary, this study aims to address gaps in the literature through the use of qualitative research methods and methodologies, such as IPA and LCP, to understand food-related behaviors and practices amongst newly cohabiting couples.

Delimitations

- *Coresiding and cohabiting* (Brown & Booth, 1996; Smock, 2000) status was the primary delimitation proposed for this study. Couples who have lived together for a year or less were considered eligible for participation.
- *Children* fundamentally change the ways in which people/parents think about and prepare food. Traditionally, the mother figure is the nutritional gatekeeper (Wansink, 2003); meaning the mother purchases and prepares meals for the family. She often purchases and plans with the family's preferences first in her mind (DeVault, 1994, p. 40). The decision to exclude couples with children living in the home was made to help funnel focus on the particular interpersonal dynamic of the couple.
- *Age* of participants was considered as an exclusion strategy for this study. All subjects were required to be over the age of 21, with the maximum age set at 40 years. The age range was originally determined based on Erik Erikson's (1959) psychosocial stages, specifically young and middle adulthood, but I adjusted the range from Erikson's 20-40 to 21-40 to account for the legality of the consumption of alcoholic beverage. The age requirement was put into place in order to help try to maintain generational similarities, which in turn can help keep the sample as homogenous as possible, as per Smith, Flowers & Larkin's (2009) suggestion for selecting a sample for an IPA study.
- *People in a heterosexual, coupled/romantic relationship* that meet the other specified requirements were considered eligible. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as discussed by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) suggest adopting a straightforward study design that includes recruiting small, homogenous groups of participants. The scope of this study does not allow for LGBT couples to participate if they are in a same-

sex relationship because of the potential for complexity in power and gender roles. Future studies are being planned to focus exclusively on LGBT romantic relationships and food-related domestic behaviors.

Income and *education level* have been show to influence dietary decision making (Bradbard, Michaels, Fleming, & Campbell, 1997; Epstein et al., 2012). Couples from all educational backgrounds and income levels were eligible to participate in the study. At the time of data collection, it was not known how exclusion based on income or education could color the results. All of my participants had earned at least a bachelor's degree, so at least in terms of education the sample was coincidentally homogenous. A short demographic survey was given to the participants at the beginning of the study to collect financial and other information. Income and level of education are variables because the family structure may differ because of income or education differences.

Limitations

This study is based on the following methodological limitations:

- The primary limitation for this study is status as a couple and the length of time the couple has been cohabiting. For ease of recall on behalf of the participants, the length of relationship is less important than the time the couple has been living together. The participants were asked to be both reflexive and reflective in their thinking while participating in this study and ease of recall will improve if couples have recently moved in together.
- Participants were interviewed once as a couple (a couple being defined as one unit of data for this study) and once each individually. Rooted in phenomenology, IPA is concerned with individuals' lived experience and how they make sense of that experience. It adopts

a double hermeneutic position which means that it foregrounds the reflexive position of the researcher making sense of the participant's experiences (Smith et al., 2009). Additionally, participants were asked to take me on a tour of their home to allow for the couple to explain their living space and the interactions they have in the living space, in an attempt for me to access 'the participant's personal world' (Smith, 1996, p. 218). Both data collection methods are best suited to build focus on the individual experiences of my participants, and allowed me to be a part of the joint reflections between participants and researcher that were required to provide an analytic account of our experiences.

- This study is not meant to be generalizable; these data are specific to the individuals who take part in the study. The method of collecting the data, however, can be modified to suit most, if not all, types of interactions one would like to capture in a home-based setting. Additionally, any findings from this study are meant only to capture the experiences of the individual couples for which they represent.

There are also the following researcher-related limitations:

- This study could be redesigned for the future to include mechanisms to observe longitudinal effects, but is beyond the scope of this particular exploratory study.
- As is the case in most research, there is a potential for cultural or other biases based on my personal orientation. I combated possibilities for bias by being especially critical in reviewing how I state problems, select the data to be studies, and detail what may have been omitted through the use of a three-tiered note-taking system, including personal diary notes, reflections on field notes, and field notes.

Assumptions

This study is based on the following assumptions:

- Qualitative methods, data gathering, and analysis techniques were be used during the course of this study, as guided by Smith et al.'s (2009) expertise in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). The design of this study is meant to enable my participants to become more salient in their involvement in their lived worlds, especially around their domestic behaviors and the ways in which they interact with food.
- Couples who are newly living together and are dating or engaged are in the process of negotiating household domestic roles, especially foodwork routines. Couples with children also undergo a renegotiation of household duties upon the arrival of children into the home, but the couple most likely was at some point a couple without children, and it is during that time when domestic roles are starting to be negotiated. Couples without children have a unique and compelling story to tell regarding the ways in which they established household routines before additional changes to the life course occur.

Terminology

- ***Lived experience*** refers to definitions provided by Dilthey (1985) and Van Manen (1990). Van Manen (1990) and Dilthey (1985) share a similar understanding of lived experience, explaining that a lived experience involves being reflective about what is about to happen and what is happening in real time (Van Manen, 1990, p. 35) and an ability to be reflexive about one's behaviors, thoughts, and feelings.
- ***Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is*** a qualitative approach centered in psychology that emphasized both the experiential and experimental nature of psychology research that focused on people's engagement with the world, rather than a disassociation from the world. Smith, Flowers & Larkin's (2009) *Introduction to Interpretative*

Phenomenological Analysis is the primary text being referenced for guidance on study design, methodology, methods, and analysis for the study.

- ***Life Course Perspective or Life Course Analysis (LCP or LCA)*** is generally regarded as a holistic approach to studying the lives of people over time at significant points in their lives. This study focuses on only one point in the lifespan, whereas others using LCP may focus on one person or group and one behavior at different points along the life course in a more longitudinal nature (Devine, 2005). LCP includes discussion of seven key aspects of in the life course, including trajectories, transitions/events, cultural and contextual influences, timing in lives, and adaptive strategies (Wethington, 2005).
- ***Cohabiting*** is generally defined as two people living together on a long-term basis who are in an emotionally or sexually intimate relationship. This definition can also extend to anyone living together, but is typically reserved to describe couples who are living together but are not married (Smock, 2000). ***Coresiding*** is defined as two people who are living together in the same residence who are legally married by the state (Brown & Booth, 1996). However, for the purposes of this study, cohabiting couples are those who are simply living together in the same residence and involved in a romantic relationship.
- ***Partner, Spouse, or Couple*** is a label for the status of a relationship that is typically decided upon by the couple. All couples will be referred to as partners as a generic term indicating their status as a couple.
- ***Shared lifestyle*** is a term used to indicate that participant couples have moved in together and that they are in the process of adjusting to sharing physical space and implementing each other into their daily home routines.

- ***Food-related behaviors*** are defined as any actions, thoughts, or routines around the procurement, preparation, or consumption of food. Food-related behaviors are mostly synonymous with ***food interactions***, which more specifically captures the idea of a two-way effect between people and all of the intricacies of the procurement, preparation and consumption of food. A closely related term is ***interconnectivity***, which deals with the interactions of interactions within systems; combinations of many simple interactions can lead to emergent phenomena.

Summary

This research aims to inspire researchers, especially those who are concerned with health behavior, to consider the broader implications of food-related research, beyond morbidity and mortality. It is the nature of qualitative research to attempt to answer the "why" questions in our research. The ways in which food and eating contributes to one's health status is immensely important; however, food plays a larger role in people's lives beyond the biological and understanding the impact of how a person constructs part of their identity through their interactions with food has the potential to assist researchers in understanding that food choices and food-related behaviors are more deeply engrained in meaningful and expressive ways. Belasco (2008, p. 13) notes that scientists have studied the "negative pathologies" of food, but the more "positive and intimate features" of human interactions with food are unforthcoming.

Health researchers often know what people are doing (eating too much or too little, not exercising at all or succeeding at moving more, etc.) but we have struggled to understand why, and in what context, people do the things they do, especially those behaviors that involve the procurement, preparation and consumption of food. Additionally, this research aims to widen the scope of participants to include those who are not legally married, Future studies will widen the

scope even further to include GLBT couples, as there are many other types of coupled relationships that are vastly underrepresented in the literature. This study is designed to understand how a change in life course affects the food-related experiences of people experiencing those life changes with concern placed on taking on a detailed examination of lived food-related experiences.

The intended audience for this dissertation study is anyone who is interested in the ways in which people interact with food. I believe that public health academics interested in preventative health would benefit greatly from the approach I am taking in learning more about how couples develop patterns of behavior. The focus in public health is dealing with an obesity epidemic and the health issues that arise from being overweight or obese. Solutions for dealing with the obesity epidemic is certainly a valuable cause, but there are also generations of people yet to be born who could benefit from preventative strategies. My dissertation study is not one that aims to delineate such strategies; rather it aims to start a conversation on the ways in which we can study the development of behaviors to better understand the motivations behind behaviors and how people make decisions in their lives.

Cultural anthropologists or academics interested in the coupled dynamics of food work may be the most interested in this work due to its qualitative nature and its goals of understanding the live worlds of other people. This dissertation study aims to revisit the work of DeVault (1994), in particular, as her research was foundational for the study of feeding work in the family. As the definition of family changes, and the ways in which food is viewed in the world changes, as do our interactions with food.

This research aims to address several gaps in the literature, including but not limited to the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) in qualitative food studies, the

application of Life Course Perspective to cohabiting couples, contributing to qualitative and interdisciplinary studies on food-related behaviors and practices from a non-interventionist perspective, and a focus on less-traditional participants (the inclusion of non-married cohabiting couples). Overall, the primary objective is to reach an in-depth understanding of the everyday food experiences of couples who are adapting to a shared lifestyle by asking couples how they make sense of their food-work responsibilities upon living together and determining how (if at all) the role of nutritional gatekeeper is determined.

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CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The following chapter presents a review of the existing literature and research studies that helped frame my research theoretically, conceptually, and methodologically. First, a general introduction to food studies, how food and eating are studied, and the role food plays as an actor in people's daily lives. Second, I address relevant research studies and literature pertaining to food-related decision making among couples. Finally, I identify and discuss theoretical frameworks and methodologies that were informative to this research.

Why Study Food Interactions?

Virtually every discipline can use food as a lens through which to view a phenomenon in their field of study, not just due to its ubiquity in and necessity for life, but because of its plasticity in representing the human experience on every societal and social level (Appadurai, 1981, p. 494). Social food experiences are, by definition, those that are shared with others, but even social food interactions are first rooted in deeply personal, individual choices that are not often easily shared with, or seen by, others.

In order to understand the role of food in everyday life, one must examine the many ways in which food affects us, or plays a role, in our daily lives. Belasco (1998, p.2) notes that food is not only essential to life; it is also the leading cause of morbidity and mortality on a global scale, from sudden illness due to poisoning or allergic reaction to long term ailments such as obesity and diabetes. Rozin (1999, p. 9-12) supports Belasco's observations, further describing food as a powerful object, responsible for death, disease, and an entire array of positive and negative emotions beyond the obvious physical connections.

Since morbidity and mortality are certainly the most serious, negative effects food can have on our lives, it makes sense that the most common way to view food and eating is from a

pathological perspective. However, the study of food and its effects on the human condition can also be approached from a more positive, intimate perspective. Our interactions with food are not limited to intake, digestion, morbidity, and mortality; eating is a "profoundly social" activity that "sustains social and emotional life as well as physiological wellbeing" (DeVault, 1994, p. 35). Food is an actor in people's daily lives, and the more we try to understand the multi-dimensional role that food plays in everyday life, the more likely we are to properly address food-related consumption and production issues.

Examining food from the perspective of its ability to foster and maintain relationships elevates food as having a more meaningful emotional role in people's daily lives. Researchers need not focus primarily on the pathologies of food, even if the focus is on pathologies of food; understanding the ways in which food interactions contribute to personal and social identity have the potential to contribute to both pathological and sociologically engaging studies. It can be easy to dismiss the study of food as a banal aspect of daily life, but it is in those daily rituals of procurement, preparation, and consumption that we learn that "dining is more than feeding" (Belasco, 2008, p. 34), and the cultural study of food has much to offer both in the study of negative pathologies of food and eating and the more positive and intimate aspects of "who we are, where we came from, and who we want to be" (Belasco, 2008, p.12). Food studies, as either its own discipline or as a sub-discipline, has the potential to reveal the complex nature of food in our everyday lives and its larger impacts on society.

Surprisingly little work has been done in health studies concerning people's daily interactions with food using culture, relationships and identity as foundations (Rozin, Kurzer & Cohen, 2002). Additionally, the food interactions that have been studied have been done to combat an illness or pathology, such as the qualitative examination of the selves of women with

eating disorders (Nunn, 2009). There is a lack of literature that aims to understand the ways in which culture and relationships inform interactions with food in general, through a neutral lens of learning and understanding, rather than evaluating and solving.

It can be easy to dismiss the study of food as a banal aspect of daily life, the cultural study of food has much to offer both in the study of negative pathologies of food and eating and the more positive and intimate aspects of "who we are, where we came from, and who we want to be" (Belasco, 2008, p.12). Because interactions with food and eating experiences are not always memorable, and are essential parts of everyday life, we commonly focus on aspects of its essential nature, such is the case of the role food plays in disease and illness, food systems, and issues surrounding hunger and food availability. While these are certainly important issues, food, and opportunities to study its impact on our lives are ever present, but are often ignored and deemed too mundane for serious consideration. It is in these mundane tasks that we are able to see the simple interactions we have on a minute-to-minute basis with the foods that we eat, and begin to see the ways in which we interact with food, and the way food interacts with us.

Expressing Sense of Self through Food

Because of its ubiquitous, ever-present nature, food can be studied in as many ways as it has been and is used in daily life. While it is true that everyone must eat to survive, the actions we perform around food define cultures, note changes in societies, communicate socioeconomic status, and express politics. Foodways is a term used most frequently to describe the study of why we eat what we eat and what meanings we can derive from such behaviors. The ways in which food shapes and is shaped by social organization are essential to the examination of foodways, and expressions of a sense of self through food.

Using food as a lens through which to view cultures seemed to have always been part of a larger study of culture. Examining the ways in which an individual, or a group, procures, prepares, and dines on food allow us to gain a greater understanding of the ways in which people view their world. Interactions with food are one of the ways in which we, as humans, express cultural sense of self (Belasco, 2008, p. 15). There are many fiction and non-fiction books, essays, and short stories that mention food in passing as a way to enrich the written world and help us connect with characters, or as an example to explain a larger argument (Proust, 1913). Categories and identifiers can help us intellectually navigate how what we eat can tell us about who we are; race and/or ethnicity (Ray, 2004), religion (Wirzba, 2011), class (Long, 2007), and politics/ethics (Safran-Foer, 2010), to name a few.

Lucy Long (2007) describes one example of an expression of sense of self through food from a cultural or class-centered perspective. In the Midwestern United States, green bean casserole is ever-present during Thanksgiving and Christmas family meal times and seemed to be an unintentional performance of identity in that nearly every celebration table held at least one (usually more) green bean casserole. Long informally surveyed people in her Midwestern community about the local traditions surrounding green bean casserole and found that it was a well-known favorite of the fall season. The dish is described as inexpensive, easy to make, easy to transport, requires essentially no culinary skills, and is consistent if the traditional 3-ingredient recipe of a canned green beans, canned cream of mushroom soup, and fried onions is followed.

When the traditional recipe is not followed, the dish takes on another meaning. People may not like some of the ingredients, or may change the recipe from one they previously enjoyed to a healthier version, or put their own twist on what is considered a classic dish that “has always been there” (Long, 2007, p. 39). Long’s observations are important because they show that food

is communal, and there are certain expectations about what 'we' as a community eat as opposed to 'others' outside the community; the community individuality is built on the attitudes and beliefs of its members. A sense of individual self is developed through community identity, which then informs the community identity, and if a person were to leave that community, he or she would take that sense of self into other interpersonal relationships.

Ray (2004) reminds us that food is only mundane when we are surrounded by familiarity. By showing how Bengali immigrants to the United States decide what defines their ethnic cuisine and differentiates it from American food, he reminds us that such boundaries are uncertain for all newcomers. In his book, Ray (2004) interviews Bengali household members, examines family menus and recipes for traditional Bengali dishes, and talks with families about substitutions made due to availability of ingredients in those traditional Bengali dishes. By examining the ways in which food habits change as people immigrate to the United States, we are able to decode the tensions between nostalgia for home and home cooking and remembering the reasons why leaving home was necessary. As was true with Ray's (2004) recounting of the experiences of Bengalis adjusting to culinary life in America, people retain the "accent" of their native cuisine all throughout life, even if that cuisine is regional rather than international.

Sense of self can be expressed through food choices that are made from an ethical standpoint. Jonathan Safran-Foer (2010) speaks critically of the trials and tribulations of strict vegetarians and vegans in *Eating Animals*. Sensitive to the centrality of food in culture and family life, Foer begins the discussion of factory farms, animal breeding, mass confinement of livestock and their assembly-line slaughter by describing his grandmother's complex relationship with food and what he will tell his newborn son when he asks, "Why do we eat some animals but not others?" (Safran-Foer, 2010, p. 9). Safran-Foer (2010) is struggling with his ideal sense of

self because of his morals and ethics towards killing any animal for food. He likes the taste of animal products, but he is not comfortable killing an animal for food. We are, he suggests, defined not just by what we do (or want); we are defined by what we are willing to do without (Safran-Foer, 2010, p. 298). What we eat, or what we do not eat, is a part of our sense of self, and those choices are visible aspects of personal character that can be highly politicized.

For communities in Minnesota, the making of booya, a hearty, meaty stew similar to goulash, is a model of community and an example of a communal identity developed around food. Booya is both the name of a food and the event during which the food is served. The events are usually hosted as annual fundraisers for local churches, clubs, firehouses, and neighborhood associations.

Booya is a living tradition; each family or sometimes organization has their own recipe for booya that is passed down through the family. Booya is both inclusive and exclusive; the vital seasonings are often kept secret from all but one family member, and the methods of preparation listed on the recipe are left vague as they are often taught by the person in charge of cooking the booya to the next person in line. There are good booyas and better booyas, each a little bit different but somehow all have the same name. Kaplan (1997) discusses the "push-pull of inclusion-exclusion" at work in the community surrounding booya (the event and the food), speaking to the ways in which a "specific sense of community among the people who participate in the entire booya tradition" (p. 170) can be formed through the shared understanding of one highly specialized dish.

Booya (the food) becomes a badge of identity while the process of making it models or creates community structure. Kaplan (1997) explains that booya is clearly a food-oriented event but the overarching purpose of the event is to raise money for local organizations; because of this

structure, you are either the person or group involved in preparing the booya, or the person supporting the group by consuming booya. Regardless, everyone in the community has a role to play by either preparing or consuming the booya, and that sense of inclusion creates community. Members of the group preparing the booya have culturally determined roles. The booya chef is always a senior male who knows the secret ingredients and has apprenticed with the master booya chef in the family (also male). Single women do not help with the booya, but the wives of men involved in the booya are asked to do vegetable prep work. Meat prep work is reserved for younger males (Kaplan, 2007). The division of labor based on gender is unique in that it is a reversal of what is typically seen in American culture; because cooking is being done outside, and involves an abundance of meat, it is seen primarily as a male activity, where older men teach younger male apprentices the way of booya. Women take on a sous-chef role in the prepping of the vegetables that go into the pot, but no women are present during the evening before the booya is served; it is a time for men to be outside and bond while cooking outdoors. It is a special, pleasurable event that is outside the everyday experience of foodwork.

Through their participation in the tradition, booya makers and partakers derive and reinforce a sense of community identity through their participation in the tradition, and, “has shaped the generic booya tradition into a clear expression of its contemporary sense of self” (Kaplan, 2007, p. 186). From the most basic level, “cuisine,” or a shared set of protocols or usages communications or behaviors regarding food (Farb and Armelagos, 1980, p. 190-198) separates “us” from “them.” Most communities in Minnesota that host booya believe the event and the food are both theirs, in terms of locality and culture. However, booya (the food) exists to some degree in Canada, and about eight cultural groups in Minnesota also claim booya as their own invention. Regardless of this, Minnesotans claimed the foodway and fight about its ethnic and

geographic origins on a regular basis (Kaplan, 2007). Even in a community where all are involved, there are still attempts at defining, and owning, the 'true' booya experience. There are many accounts of the ways in which people use food as a centralizing agent within their respective cultures (Fagone, 2006; Ray, 2004), but much still remains to be understood. In American culture, power is held by cooks and consumers (Avakian, 1997; Avakian & Haber, 2005; Williams-Forsen, 2006), growers and procurers (Belasco, 2008; Pollan, 2006), and by the food itself and the ways in which it can negatively or positively affect health (Nestle et al., 1998).

Thomas' (2008) essay on the culture of prison food talk about how food sustains us, fills the voids in our day, and symbolizes our status and identity. Food becomes a focal point for the organization of our life, functions as a social ritual in communing with others, and provides cultural signposts to negotiate and navigate through our social world. For the incarcerated, making choices surrounding food are fewer, and typically involve whether you do or do not want to eat what you are served. Seen as a limited resource, food symbolizes the power of the prison's control and the inmates' lack of choice and diminished sense of self; through food, prison can strip inmates of their sense of identity. Yet, through in-cell cooking, food can also be used as a means of resisting social control, a way to adapt to life in prison while preserving one's individuality, and a way to make every day seem a little less miserable.

Through food, the prison system is able to strip inmates of their sense of self and showcase their powerlessness. Mealtime remains a constant reminder of where a prisoner is, the meals he or she is missing with family members, and what the prisoner has lost overall – any sense of choice or control (Thomas, 2008, p. 170). Because food is a key element in defining our

identity, the complete lack of all control over what and when to eat is severely limiting, and can deprive inmates of all sense of self.

For example, in a personal essay on in-cell cooking from *The Convict Cookbook* (2004), inmate Rick Webb describes public perceptions about prisoners having all their basic needs provided for them, but inmates still seek out other foods that resonate with them on a personal level. The incarcerated have limited abilities to express their sense of selves through food, but with a little creativity and wishful thinking, a cup of ramen noodles with some hot sauce can remind someone of grandma's homemade chicken noodle soup.

We have an inherent need to express ourselves; the ways in which that can be achieved through food are seemingly limitless. Tools designed for eating and the times they are used, for example, the use of chopsticks over a fork or hand, tells us about culture, tradition, and the kind of food we are eating. The ways in which we eat are highly performative; the performance of identity happens in the everyday in each action, decision, speech act, with intent or not, and communicates who we are as individuals and part of a bigger whole.

We often do not make choices about what, where and how to eat it in isolation. Menzies (1970) notes that even when people are eating alone, they never really are eating alone because they are eating within the context of a larger societal influence. Commensality, or eating with other people, is a natural human activity that involves other shared food activities, such as meal planning, shopping for food, and cleaning up after a meal has been prepared (Sobal & Nelson, 2003; Sobal, Bisogni, Devine, & Jastran, 2006). The people with whom we share a meal can indicate social, societal, class, economic and gender roles and positions of power in groups.

Family Food Choices & Food Systems

Food and eating behaviors have been studied at various times in the human life cycle. Studies have explored how parents change their eating behaviors upon learning they are soon to be parents (Kemmer et. al., 1998), once they become parents and form families (Charles and Kerr, 1986, 1988; DeVault, 1994; Kerr and Charles, 1986), as families dissolve into divorce (Lee et al., 2005), as we age (Falk et. al., 1996) and as partners are lost (Shahar, Schultz, Shahar & Wing, 2001). The majority of food research in this area has focused on family food systems and the division of household labor, including shopping for food and cooking meals (Carneval & Pruitt, 1992; DeVault, 1994; Goldscheider & Goldscheider, 1987; Gregory, 1999; Marshall & Anderson, 2000).

There are different measurements that can be used to qualify the types of groups that are formed around food and eating. Even if someone perceives they are eating alone, another interpretation would state that a lone diner is really eating within a larger social context (Menzies, 1970). Traditionally, commensal units are groups of people who assemble to consume meals, snacks, or beverages together (Bove et al., 2003; Sobal & Nelson, 2003; Sobal et al., 2002), with the family being the most basic and common commensal unit. Additionally, the commensal units can be broken into private and public spheres, with the family representing the private, and "institutional commensal units," (Sobal et al., 2002) consisting of co-workers or other less intimate groupings, representing the public (Sobal & Nelson, 2003; Sobal et al., 2002). Some of the most intimate private commensal units are typically experienced in pairs; a mother breastfeeding her child or a dinner for two between romantic partners.

Additionally, Bove et al. (2003) describe "commensal careers," or the ways in which we change our eating behaviors and eating partners over time. A person can have a vegetarian or

vegan career, where for a period of time s/he eats according to the rules of those diets. Sobal, Bove & Rauschenbach (2002) use commensal careers to examine the ways in which relationships with eating partners change as they progress through different periods of their social lives. The negotiation process of selecting and personalizing foods for individual family members, as noted by DeVault (1994), is a common occurrence; the mother is typically responsible for making sure all food preferences are noted and considered, while the role of the father or husband is to provide the wealth necessary to purchase and prepare such foods. The couples DeVault (1994) includes in her study assumed rather traditional gender roles, and she interviewed primarily married couples with children. A more recent snapshot of couples in the 21st century who are in the process of developing their commensal careers with their partners is necessary to being to account for different kinds of couples in a changing world.

Analysis of food choices has largely focused on individual thoughts, preferences, and behaviors, even though our food choices most frequently do consider other people. The analysis of eating patterns of individuals in the Framington Heart Study highlighted data that showed eating patterns being relayed through social networks (Pachucki et al., 2011). A greater emphasis was placed on the idea that you eat differently with different people in your social network. For example, spouses were found to have the most influence upon the other spouse's eating behaviors and patterns, most likely because of the permanency of their shared living arrangements. The study concluded that it is not only what you eat, but whom you eat it with, and that a person's eating behavior and consumption patterns will be influenced by those around you to varying degrees based on your relationship with the other persons. Belasco (2008) summarizes the significance of eating together when he states that "sharing food has almost magical properties in its ability to turn self-seeking individuals into a collaborative group" (p.

19). These studies are all indications of the direct relationship between eating with others and its effects on the type and amount of food consumed. The findings of these studies are open to a broader interpretation in which subjective feelings about those commensal food experiences are connected to quality of life, sense of self, and health status.

Although the sharing of food can be seen as a significant event, for the most part, food is a mundane experience; to some, every food-related experience is a chore. Food consumption and preparation have long been associated with the woman's world, and thus have been accorded less respect and attention than male activities. The drudgery of food production has inspired many efforts to hide it, and by making food purchasing convenient and easy, or the job of someone else, it is easier for those behaviors to melt into the background of daily life as habits and not salient moments that deserve attention.

Modern Definition of Couples

Romantic relationships in the United States have been undergoing significant changes in what is considered normal or acceptable in practice. Unmarried sex, cohabitation, and childbearing have increased dramatically over the past forty years and are now common components of family life in the U.S. and other Western industrialized countries (Heuveline & Timberlake, 2004; Kiernan, 2000).

These changes have blurred the boundaries of what differences marriage brings to a relationship (Cherlin, 2004), leading one to ask if marriage and domestic partnership without marriage are significantly different in terms of their effects on a relationship. Initial studies on marriage relied on portraits of married and unmarried individuals (Gove, Hughes, & Style, 1983; Kessler & Essex, 1982; Pearlin & Johnson, 1977; Umberson, 1987), but the comparison was often done in terms of being married or not being married, because marriage was the default and

the expectation (better off into marriage (or worse off out of marriage) and an exception to the rule, and not a status of equal consideration. Much of the more recent work has incorporated longitudinal designs but maintained a focus on the married and unmarried (Horwitz, White, & Howell-White, 1996; Hughes & Waite, 2002; Korenman & Neumark, 1994; Lillard & Waite, 1995; Marks & Lambert, 1998; Murray, 2000), telling us nothing of how marriage compares to other intimate relationships.

Advances in the literature have pushed on these issues (Kim & McHenry, 2002; Lamb, Lee, & DeMaris, 2003; Skinner, Bahr, Crane, & Call, 2002), and scholars have begun to question the magnitude and scope of the marriage advantage (Marks & Lambert, 1998; Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2008). Since most studies, by default, use marriage as a unifying variable in population selection, it is necessary to challenge the extent to which the benefits of marriage are causal and shared with cohabitation. In doing so, a range of outcomes tapping important dimensions of well-being, including psychological well-being, health, and social ties, can have proper attention drawn to them to account for possible variations in outcomes both within and across union statuses.

Fitzpatrick and Wampler (2000, p 92) look specifically at the benefits of marriage through the examination of married couples. They identified the first few years of marriage as the time during which the pattern of the interactions in the relationship are established. Those patterns create the foundation on which the future relationship will stand. This is relevant to the framework of this study because the relationship is likely to undergo many changes throughout its duration, brought about by major events in the life course, and couples will often look back to the early phases of a relationship for guidance on how to proceed forward during times of change. Fitzpatrick and Wampler (2000, p. 92) give an example of developing a pattern of

conflict avoidance during this time, and state that problems that are left unaddressed during the first two years of a marriage will become problematic later on. One major critique of this study is the examination of only married couples, implying that marriage is the only condition under which these negotiations occur, and does not take cohabiting before marriage into consideration.

Since one of the goals of this study was to speak with participants who are in the process of building a partnered identity, which includes the establishment of domestic and household roles and duties (Fitzpatrick & Wampler, 2000, p. 93), part of the participant selection process included determining how long the couples had been living together. Fitzpatrick & Wampler (2000) specify the “first few years” (p. 92) of marriage (or cohabiting, as is the case with this study, as all study participants were unmarried at the time of their involvement in the study) as the “honeymoon phase” (p. 92), and the time during which most domestic and household patterns are established.

It should be noted, however, that the honeymoon phase of a relationship has recently been redefined, due to the fact that newlyweds have reported being most unhappy during the first year of a marriage (Cummins, 2013) because of the adjustment of learning to live together. Cummins (2013) polled the happiness of over 2,000 Australian couples, with the average happiness score being 75 out of 100 possible points. The Impact of Marriage on Wellbeing report shows married people enjoy a Personal Wellbeing Index (PWI) in the upper normal range of the high 70s as the years go by and women consistently report being happier than their husbands. The PWI is a percentage and "normal" happiness sits somewhere between 73.8 and 76.7 percent. Couples in their first year of marriage scored 73.9 on average, and during the second year of marriage, overall happiness increases to 78.4, and for those who have been married for forty or more years report the highest level of happiness at 79.8.

With Fitzpatrick and Wampler's (2000) identification of the first few years as being key to the foundation for the future of the martial relationship, and Weinberg's (2012) more recent, and detailed snapshots of marital happiness during the course of the marriage, specifically during the first and second years, and supporting Ruvolo and Veroff's (1997) assertion about the first year of marriage, and observations of the difficulties during third year of marriage, it is evident that the first three years of marriage are integral to the development of a marital identity and are the times during which the most change occurs. In order to understand the ways in which couples develop marital (or coupled) identity, we must examine the process of the development of this identity as it is happening.

Food-related Decision Making among Couples

Entering into marriage, or choosing to live together as a couple, is a significant life event that signifies major change in the life course. Marriage, or living together in a committed relationship, joins two previously independent people into a new social unit. As a social unit, the two are likely to participate in sharing of thoughts, feelings, and experiences that are unique to each of them, and engage in new experiences with each other. While it may have been the case before cohabiting, couples will most likely start sharing more meals together on a regular basis upon living together full-time (Devine et al., 1998). Entering into the commensal career of marriage or cohabitation is a significant transformation that has the power to alter "the patterns, expectations, and interpretations of shared eating practices" (Bove et al., 2003, p. 24; Sobal et al, 2002).

Deciding what to eat entails a rough negotiation among considerations of sense of self and others, convenience, and responsibility. Responsibility entails being aware of the consequences of one's actions. The food industry's primary product is convenience. For new couples who are

adapting, convenience and responsibility may be key factors leading to decisions about food and eating (Bove et al., 2003).

DeVault (1994) analyzes housework and feeding the family, two activities that are traditionally viewed as women's work. Her goal was to shine a light on this often neglected aspect of women's lived experiences by asking about what actually happens in their homes and daily lives. Through examining class and gender and how those concepts structure our society and its tasks, DeVault (1994) was able to provide a narrative about the patterns of cooking and caring that women provide to the family structure and make broader insights into American culture as a whole.

DeVault (1994) also discusses what she describes as "caring work," or the various ways in which women care for others, attributing this role mostly to the ways in which culture has assigned divisions of labor within the household. Women take pride in and satisfaction in the craft of feeding others, and DeVault acknowledges that it is "culture and family, not nature, that puts spoons in hands" (1994, ix). DeVault's (2004) observations are indeed representative of couples who strive to fulfill ideations of gendered work in the household, but she raises questions about whether gender equity in household roles can be replaced by the ability for all persons to care for each other unilaterally without the prompting of gender roles.

However, the American family portrait is evolving to include same-sex couples and opposite sex couples who have no desire to marry, in addition to those couples who marry but do not feel the need to aspire to ascribe to traditional notions of gender performance, in the home, as parents, or in the workplace. In some ways, gender neutrality in domestic work is already taking place, and the ways in which we care for our families are also progressing. The pattern under which we operate, though, are still highly gendered in a majority of cases and this informs the

ways in which couples handle household duties and activities in general and especially related to food.

Upon cohabitation, couples enter into a period of experimentation where they intentionally try to identify foods that they mutually enjoyed or preferred (Bove et al., 2003) that were easily prepared in the home. Discussions about recipes and meals also occur during this time. Bove et al. (2003) state that all couples in their study came into some kind of "dietary convergence", (p. 26) or the act of taking one's individual food system and merging it with someone else, in this case a cohabiting spouse or partner, to align more closely with that significant other.

Kemmer, et al. (1998a) identifiy being a spouse as one of the most significant roles a person can take on, and eating together as a couple is an important spousal obligation. Prior to establishing a relationship, spouses or partners most likely had prior eating history with friends, families, co-workers, and other commensal units, and this provided a background, or a food identity, for each person. These previous experiences developed and solidified food-related desires, ideals, and preferences.

Spouses, however, tend to eat similar types of foods and to have similar nutrient intakes (Eastwood et al., 1982; Kolonel & Lee, 1981; Lee & Kolonel, 1982; Louk et al., 1999; Stuart & Davis, 1972) and spousal influences on food choices are especially visible when one partner wants or has to adopt a special diet (Bove et al., 2003; Falk et al., 2000; Sobal et al., 2002). In cases when one partner adopts a special diet and the other does not (Savoca and Miller, 2001), the potential for discordancy in the relationship increases greatly. Savoca and Miller (2001) explore people's experiences with diabetes prior to their diagnosis with the goal of examining the beliefs and perspective among people with type 2 diabetes mellitus about the dietary requirements, food selection and eating patterns, and attitudes about self-management practices

before they were to begin dietary accommodations due to the condition. Eating patterns were influenced by participants' knowledge of diabetes management and the greatest challenges to adopting and maintaining nutrition recommendations occurred when the recommendations were dissimilar to prior eating practices that had been established. Those eating patterns had been developed over time, in tandem with the family dynamic, and spouses were found to be equally as helpful an unhelpful in maintaining dietary goals (De Bourdeaudhuij, 1997; De Bourdeaudhuij & Van Oost, 1998).

Wives are more likely to adopt their husband's dietary changes than a husband adopting his wife's dietary changes (Charles & Kerr, 1988; Savoca & Miller, 2001). Savoca and Miller (2001) write that most women in their study acknowledged that their husbands wanted them to eat and be healthy as long as the new, healthful diet did not interfere with his eating habits. However, some women were the gatekeepers for all food-related practices in the home, and those women reported developing healthful cooking, shopping, and consumption practices that included the entire family, and by her influence, the entire family was eating more healthfully. When male participants were asked about their experiences with adjusting to a diabetic-friendly dietary routine, 12 of 19 men reported that their wives not only engaged in regular physical activity with them, but also prepared healthful meals. Other evidence of the nurturing nature of women is found in the "widower's effect," described by Belasco as instances when a male partner dies shortly after his nurturing spouse dies (Belasco, 2008, p. 29).

Partners with children create a different familial dynamic when compared to a couple who do not have children. Blake, Bisogni, Sobal, Jastran & Devine (2008) investigate how adults construct an evening meal and discovered that women were the most likely party to be in charge of creating that meal. Through multiple interviews, participants explained their general scenarios

for completing the meal the night before, with the aim of describing typical experiences. Upon analysis, these researchers identified what they labeled as multiple "scripts" through which the meal provider described his or her actions. Each script was related to gender, parenthood, and spousal characteristics, and further specifications were made through personal values and household structure. Exclusively, women used the "provider" script, wherein most of the decision making, preparation, and cleaning was competed by them. The "egalitarian" script included a routine where both men and women shared the tasks and chores associated with shopping, cooking and clean-up. The "struggler" script coincides with Savoca and Miller's (2001) groups of women who tried to provide healthful meals, but were met with resistance by their partners or other family members.

Breakfast was often unchanged for couples in Bove et al.'s (2003) study, because they kept to the same preparation schedules for work or other activities as they had before moving in together, but this was only true on the weekdays. Weekend breakfast, when leisure time was shared, showed evidence of dietary convergence because similar breakfast items were also shared, and were also deemed "special" (p. 28).

Little is known about couples outside the context of family, and even less about non-traditional couples and the ways in which they identify with and through food. One might suspect that married and unmarried cohabiting couples differ in some ways, but for Bove et al.'s (2003) couples, it was the actual sharing of shopping, cooking, and eating that mattered, not marital status; most food-related operations functioned in the same way prior to marriage as when they were cohabiting within marriage.

Regarding other preferences that are known to exist in couples, eating together was preferable to eating alone (Bove et al., 2003). Sharing the same foods at the same time in the

same place was considered ideal and most pleasurable, because both the preparation and sharing of the meal provided time to socialize. Cooking and clean-up was more manageable for couples who were both employed, because there was a feeling of equal responsibility for cleaning up due to both partners being busy at work during the day. Cohabitation led partners to create more elaborate meals, pay more attention to the preparation and eating of meals, more attention to the quality of foods in meals. Marital partners were in part chosen based on their food compatibilities, and were indicators of "like mindedness" (p. 28). Some partners hid their dietary preferences while dating, eventually revealing differences in hopes or insisting that those differences be accepted. Other partners hid preferences and demanded that those preferences be accepted before moving on to a long-term partnership.

In summary, to understand the role of food in everyday life, one must examine the many ways in which food affects us, or plays a role, in our daily lives. Because of its ubiquitous, ever-present nature, food can be studied in as many ways as it is present. While it is true that everyone must eat to survive, the actions we perform around food define cultures, note changes in societies, communicate socioeconomic status, and express politics. Food and eating behaviors have been studied at various moments in the human life cycle, but little focus has been placed on couples who do not have children and have recently started building their lives together in a common space. It is at this time when the couple begins to develop their coupled interactions with food, and when adjustments to their prior individual lifestyles undergo change. As the definition of family changes in the United States, researchers too must adjust to what constitutes as a familial unit, and embrace the challenges associated with studying the behaviors of diverse groupings of people.

Each partner brings his or her own food histories into the relationship, that include preferences built through gendered, ethnic and class-based determinants, and results in two individuals combining their individual food systems into one joint food system. Bove et al.'s (2003) foundational study showed how crucial it is to examine joint spousal food choices while the couple is in the process of blending those two individual food systems into one joint system, explaining commensal eating as an important component of the courtship process. There were marked transformations upon marriage (or cohabiting) where the primary commensal unit was the coupled unit. Using DeVault's (1994) analysis of housework and caregiver roles of involving "feeding work" and "caring work," two activities that are traditionally viewed as women's work, a picture of domestic life being represented through food-related activities and behaviors begins to take form.

Theoretical Perspectives

In the following section, two theoretical perspectives are discussed that have had a strong impact on the ways in which the study has been designed, how the study was conducted and how the findings will be disseminated. First, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 2009) is discussed in terms of its three major theoretical underpinnings; its history and theoretical foundations, hermeneutics, and idiography. Life Course Perspective is discussed next in terms of its foundations and history, with special consideration towards contributions of the Life Course Perspective to research on food decision making in marital/cohabiting/never-married families.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

IPA is particularly suited for use in challenging understandings that are based in pathologizing behaviors, or as Smith et al. (2001) describe it, as "othering people" (p 143). IPA

is informed by three key areas of the philosophy of knowledge: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography. The first section discusses a brief history of phenomenological thought from Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre (1948, 1956) and the most relevant contributions from those philosophers that lead to the development of IPA.

Jonathan Smith (1996) first called for a qualitative approach centered in psychology that emphasized both the experiential and experimental nature of psychology research, one that focused on people's engagement with the world, rather than a disassociation from the world. Smith et al. (2009) recognize several phenomenological scholars who contributed to the development of IPA as a qualitative, experiential, and psychological research approach, but note that phenomenology as an ideology is key to providing us with the means to examine and comprehend lived experience. The approach has its origins in phenomenology and symbolic interactionism, which hold that human beings are not passive perceivers of an objective reality, but rather that they come to interpret and understand their world by formulating their own biographical stories into a form that makes sense to them (Brocki & Wearden, 2006).

Husserl is the first to iterate that the goal of phenomenological thought is to step out of the everyday attitude, also described as our natural experiences, and transition to a state of having a "phenomenological attitude" (Smith et al., 2009, p 12) where we can be reflexive of our perception of objects in our worlds, rather than just experiencing those objects/worlds. Additionally, Husserl also broached the question of how we come to know our own experiences of a given phenomenon, and asked how do we measure those observations with rigor and depth with enough satisfaction as to be able to identify the essential qualities of that experience?

Husserl discusses the answer to these questions from a very philosophical perspective, but his musings lead us to focus on what is experienced in the consciousness of the individual through

intentionality, or "relationship between the process occurring in consciousness and the object of attention for that process" (Husserl, 1927, para. 2) Consciousness is not merely being aware, it's being aware of a particular something. In order for others to control being influenced by their own awareness, Husserl introduced bracketing, or putting one's own experiences off to the side/out of the mind in order to make the familiar unfamiliar (Husserl, 1927, para. 3) in order to get into a phenomenological state of mind when trying to observe the consciousness of others. Husserl also emphasized that bracketing does not make the life world disappear, but it does make us examine that taken for granted world through a series of *reductions*, or different lenses, through which to view that world. We can observe those worlds through different lenses, but we must also think about and analyze that world through those same lenses.

The goal of using multiple lenses through which to view a phenomenon was used to make the assumptions of the viewer more clear and noticeable. Husserl instructs phenomenological thinkers to participate in intense reflection through multiple reductions through multiple viewpoints in order to fully experience the experience. One such type of reduction is an *eidetic reduction*, used to view the *essence* of an experience---what are the iconic factors that make that experience *that* experience? Using multiple reductions helped Husserl in his understanding the underlying factors that make something *something*, and how those understandings carry over into the lived experience (Husserl, 1927, p. 129).

Husserl believed that phenomenology is meant to examine experiences in the way that they occur, within their own terms. However, he is a philosopher, and his focus was more on the conceptual ideas of lived experience, not specific processes that would allow us to practice the kinds of inquiry he kind of describes. Husserl talked about what he would need to do to conduct

an analysis of his own lived experiences, rather than a person analyzing another person's lived experiences.

Overall, Husserl's contributions include, most significantly, the means to focus on the importance of reflection. IPA uses bracketing in a less formal sense, to acknowledge that we do indeed have our own thoughts and feelings and perceptions, and we need to pay close attention to those and how they may affect, or contribute to, a shared understanding of a lived experience. Husserl wanted to discover the *essence* of experiences, to harness the individual psychological processes (Heidegger, 1962, p. 74-75; Moustakas, 1994, p. 26), while IPA "has the more modest ambition of attempting to capture particular experiences as experienced for particular people" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 16). Husserl makes a case for focusing on experience and the perception of experiences, but his intense focus on being overly descriptive about those experiences and the transcendental nature of his theorizing does not contribute to the overall goals of IPA.

Heidegger was a student of Husserl, but set on a different phenomenological path, moving away from Husserl's transcendentalism. Heidegger's concerns about existence were ontological in nature, and centered around the ways in which we make the world meaningful—through our practical activities, our relationships, and how the world appears to us (Smith et al., 2009, p. 17; Moustakas, 1994, p. 10)

In *Being and Time* (1962/1927), Heidegger's main objective was to explain *Dasein* ('there-being') from a worldly perspective, where we, as people, are thrown into a pre-existing world where objects are meant to be used and interacted with, thus minimizing our abilities to detach from that world during the phenomenological process. This differs from Husserl's thought that we are equally a part of the world as the world is a part of us. The concept of *Daesin*, or "being

there" is Heidegger's way of expressing the desire to explore what it is to be a human being through the study of one's lived world.

Heidegger (1962) also emphasizes reflexivity in our attention to how we alter and shape the lives of others, and how they also alter and shape our lives. This concept of *intersubjectivity* (Heidegger, 1962) specifically refers to the shared and interconnected engagement that we have in the world. Heidegger gave us a sense of how our existence can be viewed in a practical sense, but that requires a certain level of reflexivity. If we are to become aware of our engagements in the world, and take note of the existential nature of time and sociality, Heidegger (1962) believes that we must acknowledge and operate within the understanding that people are thrown into an already-made world of culture, language, and practices, and we must adapt to that world and learn that world in order for us to be able to exist in that world.

In terms of IPA, Heidegger's (1962) major contributions were illustrating that our existence in the world is relative, and our meaning-making is always in relation to some other thing, and this is what gives us perspective (which is also subjective), and making sense of someone's meaning making activities is always interpretative and contextual.

Merleau-Ponty echoes Husserl's views on science and knowing, in that we derive meaning and knowledge from our experiences. Although Merleau-Ponty shared those views, he believed that science did not adequately conceptualize the ways in which we perceive and interact with our realities. Merleau-Ponty focused on the process of embodying our relationships with the world; that is, to give our experiences a form in our world. This concept was called *body-subjects*, where "the body is no longer conceived as an object in the world, but as our means of communication with it" (1962, p. 106).

Merleau-Ponty's major contribution to phenomenology involved the development of the idea of *body-subjects,* and how our interactions with our environment are subjective because our interactions always originate from within the self. We can attempt to embody another's perspective, but we can never truly know what another person has felt or experienced. The experience of others belongs to their own embodied perspectives. For example, a physical body serves as a means to interact with the world. We can relate to how a glass marble might feel in the hands of another person through our own experience of handling the glass marble, but the body-subject experience is unique to every person.

Smith et al. (2009, p 19) state that for qualitative researchers in general, and specifically IPA researchers, this idea of "the body shaping the fundamental character of our knowing about the world" is crucial to the ways in which IPA researchers understand the lived experiences of others. Merleau-Ponty's descriptions of the ways in which the body interacts with the world, and the body acting as a means to interact with the world, are more practical and significant than the more abstract and logical arguments of Husserl and Heidegger. Phenomenologists ascribe different levels of importance to physiological experiences versus more cerebral experiences, but for the purposes of IPA, the body-in-the-world experience is the most important, because we must acknowledge that we can never capture the experiences of others, rather, we interpret those experiences through the expression of the sense of self given by others, and then in turn we interpret those expressions through the lens of our own sense of self. This perspective is paramount to IPA research, in that knowing that we cannot achieve this allows us to be aware of it and not overlook the concept or ignore it (Smith et al., 2009)

People are ever-changing, adapting, and our sense of self is ever-changing. Smith et al., (2009) interpret Sartre's (1948/56) contributions to phenomenology within the context of IPA to

say that we are always becoming ourselves and that the self is not something to be discovered, but rather uncovered. Sartre (1948, 1956) describes the concern to who we will be, rather than what we are, or were, as *nothingness*, or the idea that all things are present at all times, and just because something is not present, or if we are not in immediate contact with something, does not mean that it is not a part of our world and how we see that world. *Nothingness* is described by Sartre (1948/56) in terms of expectations for experiences, and adapting to those expectations should they not be true at the appropriate moment. That lack of something, or nothingness, can define an interaction or provide context to an environment, although it is not presently there.

While Merleau-Ponty focused on the sense of self and how that sense of self is shaped due to the ways in which we interact with the world, Sartre (1948, 1956) moves that thought forward by, in some ways, moving a step back or deeper, in saying that our interaction with the world is unstable because we are constantly changing beings in a world that is constantly changing and shifting. So, in essence, Sartre (1948/56) is giving more context and places a greater emphasis and provides more granularity for the significance of that body-subject interaction/experience, moving it beyond a two way street to a bustling highway with multiple intersections that emphasize a person's ability to choose different paths and thus alter their experiences.

Sartre (1948/56) also brings back Heidegger's worldly perspective on phenomenological experiences, and through the fine tuning and exploration of those interactions, brings that theory back into significance---that we are one person, and our sense of self develops while following multiple paths, and the paths taken can have extensive effects not only on ourselves, but on those with which we interact.

Human nature is about becoming, not being, within the context of one's social climate, biographical history, and individual live (Smith et al., 2009) For Smith, Flowers, and Larkin

(2009), Sartre's (1948/56) description of the phenomenological analysis of the human condition aligns more closely with the goals of IPA because "his portraits show a penetrating analysis of people engaged in projects in the world and the embodied, interpersonal, affective and moral nature of those encounters" (p. 21).

Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Sartre represent leading figures in phenomenological philosophy and major contributors to the development of IPA as a theoretical framework and research approach. The points addressed here are meant to reflect those most important to the theoretical development of IPA, and to highlight concepts that would be most useful to IPA researchers. Overall, each philosopher gets us closer to the tenants of IPA: a move away from transcendental interests and the descriptive commitments of Husserl to a world understanding of our individual place and perspective in the lived world developed by Merleau-Ponty and Heidegger. Sartre (1948/56) focuses these ideas even further by emphasizing the deeply personal, unique nature of our relationship with the world. Understanding experience is a complex undertaking that necessitates a focus on "a lived process, an unfurling of perspectives and meanings, which are unique to the person's embodied and situation relationships to the world (Smith et al., 2009, p 21).

Hermeneutics.

As important as the philosophy of phenomenology is to IPA, hermeneutics, or the theory of interpretation, is of equal importance. For Schleiermacher (1998), the interpretation of a text involved both grammatical and psychological interpretations. A text could be read grammatically, which would objectively elucidate one meaning, while a close examination psychologically would reveal the author's implications in her text. These levels of meaning are important to IPA in that part of the aim of the interpretative process is to understand the writer

and the text, or the speaker and transcripts of her words, as part of a holistic analysis (Schleiermacher, 1998, p. 266). Using Schleiermacher's understanding of the power of text and interpretation can allow IPA researchers to investigate valuable insights that go beyond what is explicitly said by our participants to a deeper, richer understanding of their lives that they may not even be aware of themselves.

Heidegger follows Schleiermacher's line of thinking when he discusses the examination of something that is hidden or buried in our lives. He uses the terms *phenomenon* and *logos* to describe the phenomenologists' primary goal of trying to "understand a thing as it presents itself" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 24). The reader, in this case, brings her own "fore-conception," (Heidegger, 1962/1927, pp. 191-192) or preconceptions, thoughts, feelings and previous experiences with her as she reads a text or listens to someone speak, and this causes her to interpret what she's hearing or reading based on her own set of experiences. This is also true of the person writing or speaking; her communication is based upon her interpretation of events in her life course.

Gadamer (1990/1960) echoes both Schleiermacher (1998) and Heidegger (1962/1927) to state that there is indeed a complex relationship between what is said and what is interpreted. Bracketing off one's preconceptions before engaging in analysis can lead to not really formally addressing other preconceptions that may appear once analysis is underway. As part of the overall sense-making process, Gadamer advocates for an iterative process that allows for the consideration of preconceptions before engaging in the text, and during the reading of the text. For Smith, Flowers, & Larkin (2009) this means that "interpretation will focus on the meaning of the text and that meaning will be strongly influenced by the moment at which the interpretation is made" (p. 27). Gadamer's insights into looking at the smallest part to understand the whole of

what is being said, to then again look at the whole in terms of its smaller parts, sheds light on the importance of the hermeneutic circle to IPA. The back and forth motion of the hermeneutic circle allows for a "dynamic, non-linear, style of thinking" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 28). Embracing the idea of entering into text at different, interrelated levels can allow for the interpretation of a text to be richer and thicker.

The idiographic nature of interpretative phenomenological analysis.

One of the major influences on the theoretical foundations of IPA is idiography, or a focus on the particulars of participants or cases. IPA does not intend to make broad claims for groups, for the population at large, or for understanding human behaviors a level beyond an individual case. The nature of IPA does not allow for a surface level analysis of data; instead, it depends upon thorough and systematic data collection and analysis where the goal is to gain an in-depth understanding of experiential phenomena from the perspective of a particular people from within a particular context. Generalizations can be made through an idiographic approach, but those generalizations are grounded in the particular, and can therefore be developed and discussed deliberately and thoughtfully (Smith et al., 2009, p. 29).

Life Course Perspective

The Life Course Perspective (LCP) is a "holistic approach to examining the lives of people over time" (Wethington, 2005, p. 115) and it looks for and examines the ways in which continuity and change are balanced over short and long periods of time, and how changes in the life course upset or maintain that balance. LCP is interdisciplinary, originating first in sociology, and bridging to psychology, public health, and medicine.

There are five key concepts that have helped guide LCP as a set of organizing principles and concepts for use in the study of health related topics, especially when investigating food

decision making. Wethington (2005) focused on five of the seven organizing principles and applied them to examples of food decision making in a social context (Wethington & Johnson-Askew, 2009). The five concepts are trajectories, transitions/events, cultural and contextual influences, timing in lives, and adaptive strategies (Wethington, 2005; Wethington & Johnson-Askew, 2009). Trajectories are patterns of risky or protective behaviors that have stabilized over time, and can potentially be altered during life transitions. Transitions are the major life events that occur that cause a shift in a person's social role (such as marriage, birth of a child, or death of a spouse). Cultural and contextual influences are factors that can influence the process of change over the life course, and are typically external in nature. Timing in lives deals specifically with the time during which a life event occurs, whether during childhood or adulthood or anywhere in between. Childhood is one of the most sensitive times during which a health-related alteration to the life course can have a long lasting impact on overall health and wellness behaviors. Adaptive strategies are actions taken to improve personal health and wellbeing in response to external stimuli, such as economic or societal influences. These strategies are conscious decisions made in order to cope with a change in the life course.

Life Course Perspective is an approach, not a theory. Typically, LCP is used in conjunction with other health behavior change theories if interventions are being planned. LCP has been successfully applied in observational, cross-sectional studies of nutrition and dietary behavior, and has been useful when examining disparities between different socioeconomic or ethnic groups. The nature of LCP is to be informative and to help researchers gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which life events have given structure to current thoughts and behaviors (Wethington & Johnson-Askew, 2009).

LCP is especially pertinent to the study of food due to its inclusion of key concepts that other methods of evaluating or analyzing food-related behaviors do not necessarily include (Devine, 2005); specifically, LCP is strong in its considerations of the context in which a person lives, not only in the moment, but over time and through significant changes in life. Often times there are gaps between research and practice. Some methods are made to collect information and then act on that information (in the case of food recall surveys—there is little interest in WHY foods are being eaten, rather, how to negate negative behaviors and encourage healthy behaviors regarding food preparation or eating) LCP aims to bridge that gap by looking into the reasons why people make the decisions they make based on past behavioral influences (Wethington, 2005).

A person's life course transitions and trajectories are especially important to the study of food choices in relation to health because of their strong influence over a person's system for making food choices (Devine, et al.,1998). Using a life course model to conduct semi-structure interviews of urban women and their life course, food choices, and what influences their fruit and vegetable consumption, Devine, et al., (1998) were able to reflect how past events and experiences influenced food choices made in the present. Focusing only on fruit and vegetables consumption, the authors were able to identify seven major types of experiences or events that created the current trajectory; these included food history, roles and role transition, health, ethnic traditions, resources, location and the overall food system. Most participants in the study were affected by two to three of the seven major transitions, and each change had significant influences on their fruit and vegetable consumption patterns.

Summary

This chapter presents a review of the existing literature and research studies that helped frame my research theoretically, conceptually, and methodologically. In order to understand the

role of food in everyday life, one must examine the many ways in which food affects us, or plays a role, in our daily lives. Using food as a lens through which to view cultures seemed to have always been part of a larger study of culture. People have an inherent need to express their individual sense of self through the many ways a sense of self can be constructed (through cultural identity, food, hobbies, etc). However, analysis of food choices has largely focused on individual choices, preferences, and behaviors, even though our food choices are most frequently made in tandem with a host of external and internal influences. Although the sharing of food can be seen as a significant event, for the most part, food is a mundane experience; to some, every food-related experience is a chore. The ways in which we can use food as a lens through which to view behavior, and learn about motivations behind behavior, are seemingly limitless.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY, STUDY DESIGN & METHODS

Introduction

The general framework for this study follows Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and its recommended methods for data collection and analysis (Flowers, 2008; Smith, 1996; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborne, 2003). An interpretative, phenomenological perspective is important to this study because I examined the lived experiences of my participants and the ways in which they make sense of their experiences. My overall goal is to note, in detail, the "existence, not incidence" (Yin, 1989, p. 4), of food-related experiences and practices of newly cohabiting couples adapting to a shared lifestyle.

Study Design: Phenomenology & Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

I have identified IPA as being especially relevant to the framing and analysis of my study because of the steps it takes to describe the world and the people who live in it in a descriptive and interpretative way. Firstly, IPA focuses on understanding our lived worlds and the direct involvement we have in shaping and experiencing those lived worlds. IPA is consistent with the research aims, in that it is committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences (Smith et al., 2009). It is a phenomenological approach in that it is focused on "exploring experience in its own terms" rather than attempting to reduce it to "predefined or overly abstract categories" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 1). IPA is also interpretative, and employs what is known as a "double hermeneutic" in which the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their experiences (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith et al., 2009).

As a researcher trying to understand the lived worlds of others, it is impossible for me to remove myself from the experience of understanding, as Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Sartre (1956)

iterated throughout their studies of phenomenological perspective. IPA embraces and advocates for developing a shared understanding of someone's lived world, and acknowledges that by engaging in that person's experiences, you are then becoming a part of those experiences. Thus, the interpretative element of IPA becomes evident and its importance stressed.

Experience is personal to each of us and is relative to our own experiences. Making meaning from those experiences is also a shared process, and is the main focus of IPA-framed research (Smith, 1996). IPA allows my participants to offer an account of their experience as couples adapting to a shared lifestyle, and me the freedom to interpret those accounts with my own sense-making structures.

Secondly, IPA's ideographic nature attends to the overall goals of the study. Because of IPA's concern with the particular, it is able to assist in revealing the unique experiences of participants from their perspectives. Along with a commitment to detail and depth of analysis, IPA also advocates a commitment to "understanding how particular experiential phenomena (an event, process or relationship) have been understood from the perspective of particular people, in a particular context" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 49) Because this study is designed to elicit the particular, and not make generalizations about a larger population, IPA's support of meticulous analysis of individual cases (Smith & Osborn, 2003; Smith et al., 2009) with the goal of understanding those cases fits well with my goals. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to make any universal claims about participants outside my group, Smith (2004; p. 42) cites Warnock (1987) to show that multiple studies of multiple groups over time can allow us to "delve deeper into the particular, taking us closer to the universal."

Lastly, in order for participants to truly engage with their life worlds, they must first be made aware of the details of their life worlds (Smith, 1996). Typically, people can speak about

larger themes in their lives with little difficulty, but to bring forward the mundane, ingrained behaviors and decisions of everyday life is a challenge. IPA encourages researchers to engage in that process of making a hidden part of the life world evident to participants for their further consideration and development (Smith et al., 2009, p. 50).

In summary, this study benefitted from the use of IPA because (1) it recognizes the roles each of us plays in defining our own experiences; (2) it adheres to focusing on the particular within the larger context of individual experiences and (3) encourages researchers to be a part of the process of understanding their participants' experiences. In the following sections, I discuss other considerations that informed the study design, the pilot study that helped me identify what data collection methods were best aligned with the research questions and goals, and a description of the ways in which I ultimately recruited and collected data from my participants.

Most IPA studies adopt straightforward designs, purposefully sampling small, homogenous groups of people, and interviewing them once (Smith et al., 2009, p. 52). There are more opportunities to be more adventurous with study design, but this often requires a team of researchers to manage the amount of data that can come in as a result of those bolder designs.

Pilot Study

I conducted a pilot to determine the feasibility of my proposed methods for my dissertation. The purpose of the pilot study was to field test data collection methods and evaluate not only the types, but the quality, of data produced. It was also an opportunity to practice interviewing, observing, and analyzing complex, qualitative data sets. The results of the pilot study informed me of what methods I ultimately chose for the final iteration of this research study: a short demographic survey, an individual interview accompanied by a home tour, and one semi-structured interview with the couple.

For the pilot study, I relied on a convenience sample, recruiting a straight, married couple through a mutual acquaintance in a Midwest college town. The couple did not have children at the time of the study and were not preparing to have children in the immediate future. After I identified the couple, I approached the wife and explained the scope and requirements of the study, and she then relayed that information to her husband. This couple had been married for 4 years and had lived together prior to being married.

First, I arranged a time to speak with each of the participants separately, briefly discussion basic demographic information, such as age, length of relationship, and time spent living together, and to conduct a home tour. I suspected that it was important to conduct the home tour without the other spouse present in order to limit interference and help build a relationship between myself and each participant couple. I also used the home tour as an opportunity for each participant to get accustomed to talking about themselves in the safety and intimacy of their own home.

Both tours ended in the kitchen, indicating to me the importance of the kitchen as a place for socializing and conveying personality and identity. We continued talking and sharing, and I shared a little about myself at this point with each of the participants, again to build trust and reciprocate sharing. Valuable insights were made during the home tour and this activity validated its importance as a means of collecting data and building trust between participant and researcher. While on the home tours, I was able to speak directly to the participant, in real time, about things I observed in the household. I was able to ask pre-determined questions that I had about the home itself (layout of the home, who occupies what areas, who is in charge of what food-related and household chores) in addition to asking questions about particular things I observed.

The home tours were casual in tone, but provided critical information about the ways in which each participant engaged in his or her lifeworld. It was especially interesting to hear one person's perspective on household behaviors, to then ask that person about their household behaviors, and note how those perspectives were similar or different. Beginning the pilot study with the home tour allowed me to get my footing in their domestic space and their perspectives on how they each exist in that domestic space. The home tour embodies the phenomenological theories of Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Sartre (1956) in that I can observe and hear people going through the experience of qualifying their lived worlds.

The next activity I asked the couple to complete was to go through the activities in a food identity probe. The food identity probe refers to the data self-collection kit that I assembled in order to collect and manage my data. The Food Identity Probe (FIP) contained cards asking various illustrative questions about one's daily activities and inquiries into habits (favorite meals, beverages, places to eat, etc.), a cooking activity with a specific set of tools and ingredients where participants would prepare something to eat based on the items provided, an activity that associates emotion words with pictures of food-related objects, people, times, gatherings, and overall directions on how to participate in the study. The activities were contained within a brown wicker picnic basket, and one basket was given to each couple.

Lastly, I collected reflective data from the participants in order to get feedback from them about what they think of the methods used so far, and as a way to evaluate the quality of my interactions with them. The post-probe interview feedback also helped me to understand how my participants perceived me. Upon the completion of the pilot study, I had a better understanding of the ways in which each method can provide me with rich data, as well as some of the limitations of each collection method. Some activities the couple did not enjoy or found to be too

time consuming or not worth completing. Based on their feedback, and the ways in which they navigated the probe contents, I was able to eliminate some of the probe activities and clarify instructions and purpose for the others. As a result, the probe itself has been eliminated from my dissertation study and its activities have evolved into one session including a demographic survey rather than the probe activities, the home tour, and more extensive interviewing as a replacement for the comment cards, cooking activity, and word association. I believe these are valuable data collection methods and future studies will include one or more of these methods to help answer additional questions that arose from the initial study outlined in this document.

Sample Size

I recruited with the goal of having four to six participant couples finish the study. The number of participant couples was determined through careful consideration of the selection process and final numbers of other qualitative works as summarized by Mason (2010). In this work. Mason (2010) examined the recruitment logic for many of the top qualitatively-focused studies across disciplines. It was determined that, for a phenomenological study, Creswell (1998, p. 128) recommended five to 25 participants, while Morse (2000) recommended at least six. Upon further examination of a representative sample of qualitative works, Mason (2010) determined the overall range in participant numbers was one to 50. Overall, there seemed to be much variation as to what constitutes an appropriate sample size for phenomenological studies.

Since this study was designed with IPA in mind, Smith et al.'s (2009, p. 51) suggestion of four to six participant couples was followed, as was the suggestion that each couple be considered one unit/case. IPA studies are often small in sample size, and can include a single case or cases numbering in the double digits; these numbers fall in line with Mason's (2010) overall determination that sample size can vary greatly in qualitative research studies, and it is up

to the researcher to determine her sample size based on the research questions she wishes to answer.

Smith et al. (2009) emphasize the importance of a smaller sample size when answering research questions that hope to account for an individual's experience. IPA's primary concern is with a detailed account of individual experience, which benefits from a concentrated focus on a small number of cases. As such, three to six participants is considered reasonable. Smith et al. (2009) observed that the typical number of interviews analyzed in professional doctorate projects, between four and ten, depending on the research question, "seems about right", with emphasis that it is "important not to see the higher numbers as being indicative of 'better' work" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 52).

Selection Process

Participant couples were selected according to the special criteria outlined in Chapter 1 (see *Delimitations*, pp. 15-16). Participants were bound by geographic location, claiming primary residency in the same county. IPA (Smith et al., 2009, pp. 48-51) encourages researchers to sample purposefully, contacting potential participants directly, through referral from various personal and professional contacts of the researcher, or through snowball sampling. Since this study is designed to explore the behaviors and beliefs of a unique group of participants, it seemed most appropriate to use all three types of recruitment to have the best chance at recruiting a homogenous group.

I initially contacted couples that I had met at various social functions in the months preceding data collection who had expressed interest in participating in the study once I started data collection. I met two couples during that time that had expressed interest in being contacted to participate, based on casual conversation about my work in a social setting. Both couples were

contacted via email with the IRB approved recruitment script, and both couples declined to participate in the study once formally recruited. Both couples stated that they felt that they did not have the time to participate.

Next, I contacted colleagues and acquaintances from various departments in my university, asking them to pass along the email recruitment script to department secretaries to be distributed through campus listservs that go out to faculty and graduate students. I had the most success recruiting potential participants through this method and was able to complete the study with three out of my four total participants through this recruitment method.

Lastly, I directly communicated with former colleagues who were working in the health education field at universities across the United States, and asked them if they would be willing to send out information about the study to friends and colleagues who were still living within a 50-mile radius of where the study was being conducted. A friend of a colleague posted the study information on a social networking site, and one of her friends contacted me directly regarding participation.

I received eight email responses from people who expressed interest in participating in the study, and I scheduled initial consultation interviews with the first four people who were available to do so, and informed the others that they were eligible to participate (if they were eligible to participate) and I would contact them within 2 weeks to schedule interviews if they were still needed as a part of the project. I approached scheduling this way to make sure I had at least made initial contact with additional couples in case some couples were unable to complete the study.

To further homogenize the sample, participants had to live together for a year or less. Relationship status (married or unmarried) was considered an important identifying factor for

participation in the study because the act of marriage can cause a significant shift in the ways in which a person views their relationship. Ultimately, I decided to recruit unmarried participants to keep the sample homogenous under the tenets of IPA and examine couples close to the point at which they started cohabiting. One couple had recently become engaged, but they were yet to be married at the time of data collection.

In summary, three participants were recruited into the study through digital word of mouth, where I contacted a few contacts who were able to disseminate the recruitment email through university channels, and one participant couple was recruited through my personal network of colleagues. Four couples participated in the research process from start to finish.

Participants[1]

Molly & Jack.[2]

Molly and Jack have been dating for a year and three months and have lived together since Thanksgiving of 2012. At the time of their initial interview, they had been living together for four months. They are relatively close in age (Molly, 28; Jack 27). They met through Jack's father, who is a pharmacist. Molly is also a pharmacist and she worked with Jack's father while she attended college.

They refer to each other as boyfriend and girlfriend. Molly had lived with female roommates and boyfriends in the past, but this was Jack's first time living with a girlfriend. He moved from his apartment in the town in which he works to Molly's apartment, which is about an hour away from his workplace. Part of the discussion of moving in together involved who would be moving where—Molly to Jack's apartment, or Jack to Molly's apartment. They both

[1] Please see Appendix E for the unabridged versions of these participant case descriptions.

[2] The names used are pseudonyms.

agreed that the town in which Molly lived was a nicer town that had more to offer each of them in terms of night life, dining options, and cultural activities. Jack decided to move in with Molly, too, because her apartment was "nicer," referring to his apartment as a "bachelor pad." With a combined household income close to $150,000, the couple has excess income beyond expenses at their disposal.

Some nights, Molly did not want to cook and had work to do, and Jack comes home and wants to go to the gym to exercise, and she is still ordering food in about three weekday evenings a week and trying to cook more at home. On the weekends, they still like to eat out at restaurants for at least one meal, but they value the time they get to spend together on weekends and have taken up the routine of making what they call a special meal on the weekends.

Tara & Chad.

Tara and Chad have been dating for about two years and eight months. They first met at a computer conference and began dating long distance via the internet and Skype phone calls for about a year. Chad lived in the UK during the long distance phase of their relationship, and Tara went to England to visit Chad once, and he came to the US to visit Tara twice, and the both attended the conference they met at the year prior. After the conference, Chad decided that he wanted to return to the US to pursue a master's degree in a technology related field. Tara was finishing up her undergraduate degree when Chad made the decision to move back to the US, so their relationship became less long distance, as Chad had chosen a school that was approximately two and a half hours from Tara's hometown. Tara lived with several female roommates in the past, and lived with her parents over the summers. Since Chad was living somewhat close by, they began seeing each other a couple of times a month. After finishing her undergraduate

degree, Tara decided that she wanted to pursue a master's degree as well, and moved in with Chad in August of 2012.

Living on graduate student stipends limited the types of housing Chad and Tara could afford. Chad was living in a studio apartment on campus that would not have accommodated Tara and her belongings very easily. Tara asked Chad to find them a place to live, since she was not familiar with the town to which she was moving, so Chad selected a larger campus-run apartment nearby.

Tara's mother insisted that Chad and her daughter take many of the household items that were being stored in the family's basement to furnish their new apartment. Tara was content with her mother setting up the apartment, because it was one less thing she had to do. Chad also did not appear to mind Tara's mother's involvement for the same reasons, but had found that Tara's mother's setup of the kitchen was slightly problematic.

Tara comes from a Taiwanese family. Her parents came to the US as young adults; she and her sisters were all born and raised in the US. Tara's family is a major influence in her life. Chad is a citizen of the UK and immigrated to the US for school and to continue his relationship with Tara. They never really had a conversation about who would be responsible for household tasks. From their point of view, they each ended up doing what they didn't mind doing, and not doing what they didn't like doing. This has resulted in trash and recycling not being taken out for up to two weeks at a time, an argument during the interview about who does dishes more, and laundry washed but not folded or put away. In terms of their food lives, the lack of communication about domestic roles has also resulted in Tara and Chad eating different dinners at different times. Chad is content with reheating a can of soup while Tara reheats her mother's Chinese leftovers as each person becomes hungry.

Erica & Nathan.

Erica and Nathan have been dating for about a year and six to seven months. Erica gave a month, day and year date when asked when the couple moved in together, and Nathan rounded to the month and year. They refer to each other as partners because they feel their relationship is "more than a boyfriend and girlfriend kind of relationship." They met online, a fact that Nathan was quite reluctant to talk about. I spoke to Erica first, and she prepared me for the fact that Jack was embarrassed that he had to "resort" to finding someone to date online, instead telling people that they met through mutual friends.

Since Nathan and Erica's first date was such a success, Nathan frequently came to Erica's shared apartment and stayed for extended weekends. The ex-boyfriend roommate did not take too kindly to this arrangement, so Erica and Nathan decided to move in together. They opted to purge many of their belongings and choose new furnishings together. Erica and Nathan enjoy shopping at auctions and spent the first few months living together going to auctions and finding interesting items to put into their home. When it came to setting up the kitchen, Erica brought many of her items with her, but Nathan many items at his parents' lake house, because those items were meant for the lake house and did not belong to him.

Erica is not a confident cook. Nathan is far more comfortable in the kitchen, and Erica felt that he is the more experienced cook. Recently, Erica has taken on the cooking responsibilities because of Nathan's hectic school schedule. Nathan's view on food and eating is utilitarian; while he enjoys good food, he does not require good food. Food is fuel for his other activities, and if left to his own devices, he eats whatever is available to him. Nathan felt that he gets to cook when he wants to, and when he does not want to, Erica will cook. Erica, however, felt that if she did not cook, there would be no dinner. Nathan has a tendency to forget to eat,

resulting in dinnertime being extended until 10 or 11pm. Because of Erica's presence in Nathan's life, he felt he eats on a more regular schedule, which helps him structure his days with more ease.

Lissa & Fred.

Lissa and Fred met during a departmental Halloween party just less than two years ago. Lissa was very impressed with Fred's Captain Hook costume and told him so. Throughout the night, they quite literally kept running into each other, and at one point Lissa had to remove the ends of Fred's Captain Hook wig from her drink. At the party, Lissa commented on how awesome Fred's costume was to her friends, and her friends were very surprised that he and Lissa had never met, since they were studying in the same department. Fred was working on his PhD and Lissa was working on her master's degree. Fred and Lissa happened to see each other again in the hallways of their school building a few weeks after the party and decided to go on a coffee date together. At the time of the interview, Fred and Lissa had been dating for a year and a half and lived together for seven to ten months, and were engaged to be married in the upcoming summer months.

There was quite a bit of confusion as to what to tell me in terms of when they started living together. Lissa and Fred had lived together for one night before they each left for summer internships abroad: Lissa to Kenya and Fred to Washington D.C. Fred counted the beginning of the summer (10 months)as the time they started living together because all of her belongings were in his house before they parted ways for the summer. Lissa started the clock at seven months, because they returned from their trips within days of each other, and from the airport, immediately left for a wedding in California and a visit to Fred's parents in South Dakota for two weeks.

When Fred and Lissa actually began living together, they started noticing small changes to their routine, especially surrounding food-related domestic duties. Both Fred and Lissa plan meals. Fred works from home on some days, so he has easier access to the kitchen to work on dinner prep throughout the day, whereas Lissa worked an office job. Fred and Lissa enjoy cooking together because it allows them time in the evenings to spend working towards a common goal and unwinding from the day's trials. They both stated that they share the responsibility of cooking dinner, but if one person is especially busy or unavailable to help with dinner, the other will take over the responsibilities. They describe themselves frugal when it comes to food, but insist that frugal does not mean that what they eat is of a lower quality. When comparing themselves to their friends, they do not believe that their food is as fancy or time consuming as some of their single friends, but instead opt for simple, cost effective, and tasty options.

Data Collection

The following section discusses each component of the data collection process. I visited each couple three to four times. The initial visit involved meeting the couple, IRB paperwork, and then filling out the demographic survey. The second visit involved meeting with one person to do an individual interview and a home tour. The third visit was the same meeting but with the other person in the couple. The fourth visit involved interviewing the couple together, using many of the same questions that were asked during the individual interviews and a few questions that were specific to each couple depending on their unique environment.

The home tour acted as a way to ask more probing questions about specific things I saw in the home environment that would support or challenge what was discussed during the individual interview and as a means of collecting more information about the couple that may

not have been revealed during the interview. After the individual interviews were complete, a time was scheduled where the couple could be interviewed together. The same basic questions were asked in the coupled interview as was asked in the individual interviews. The language of the questions changed slightly to reflect my asking the couple questions as opposed to asking an individual the question. Each section includes a description of each method and the kinds of data I collected from each method.

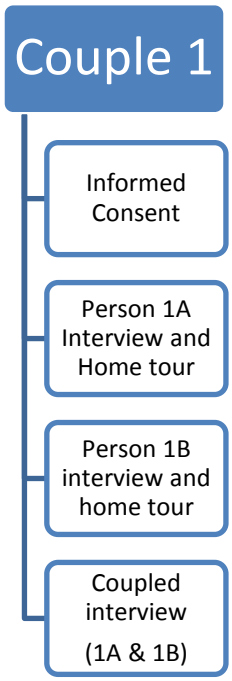

Figure 1: Example Interaction Schedule with Participant Couple

Phase 1: Demographic Survey

After the couple consented to participating in the study and was further screened for eligibility, a short demographic survey was given on paper (see Appendix A). The purpose of the survey was to collect baseline information, such as relationship status, the current living arrangement, and length of relationship, household income, and general indications as to who is responsible for meal planning in the household. The survey met its purpose to provide context

and background for the couple's living situation. For more detailed results from each of the participant couples, please see Appendix F.

	Molly	Jack	Chad	Tara	Nathan	Erica	Fred	Lissa
Type of relationship	Boyfriend/Girlfriend, intentions to marry		Boyfriend/Girlfriend		Partners		Engaged—getting married this summer	
Length of relationship	16 months		Online dating 1 year with visits, same state with visits 1 y =2 y tot		1.5 years		October 2011 1.5 years	
How long living together	Thanksgiving 2012 3-4 months		August 2012 7 months		June 2012 (9 months)		May (1 week) Summer internships 7 months or 10 months	
Responsible for Shopping	X			X		X		X
Put away food		X	X				X	
Primary cook	X		X			X	X	
Primary shop/cook	X					X		

Table 1: Participant Couple Data, Abridged.

Phase 2: Interviews

Since my primary research questions are concerned with individuals' subjective understandings of their lived worlds, objective accounts from researchers I nvolving direct observation of behaviors would be inappropriate if not combined with my participants'

perspectives on their behaviors (Flowers, Hart, & Marriott, 1999). In order to understand the social worlds in which people engage with on a daily basis, I too have to engage in those worlds, and acknowledge the impact of my presence during the interview. Participant observation, as a qualitative research method, is often used to gain greater insight into the daily lives of participants. However, issues arise when observing participants as a part of a phenomenological study. IPA stresses the importance of collecting personal verbal material directly from participants (Smith et al., 2009, p. 48).

This study is not an intervention on the couple's natural behaviors, and its goals do not include intentionally changing the couples, but I do acknowledge that my questions and observations may have some impact on the couples' sense of self, and this could lead to (positive or negative) changes in their lives after our session.

Heidegger's belief that context was significant is the justification I provide for only interviewing my participants once. Heideggerian phenomenology (1962), on which IPA is theoretically founded, states that each time an experience is revisited, the meaning of that experience may alter, depending on the disposition, or mood, of the participant and/or researcher (Heidegger, 1962; McConnell-Henry, Chapman, & Francis, 2011; Smith et al., 2009). Through Heidegger, Smith et al. (2009) communicate the same respect to the concept of self-knowing and that truth is as the person sees it and experiences it. McConnell-Henry, Chapman, & Francis (2011) agree with Smith et al. (2009) when discussing Heidegger's vision as a philosopher, not a methodologist, and that it is up to the researcher to choose the appropriate methods for generating data that compliment his philosophy.

From a theoretical perspective, time, space and context are pivotal to understanding shared meaning (Heidegger, 1962). Heidegger argued that the experiences and values of the

researcher are an integral part of the research experiences, as it is the couple, and the researcher, who will be working towards a shared understanding of the couple's experience. Taylor (1995) discusses at length the importance of a researcher being situated in the research she is conducting, and sharing those experiences though language is a vital part of reaching that shared understanding.

Before the interviews began, I engaged in an informal interviewing process after informed consent was obtained. While the couple filled out their individual demographic surveys, I answered any questions they had about the survey, specifically questions that need clarified. After the participants filled out the surveys, I quickly scanned the surveys to see if there were any discrepancies between them. Each of the four couples had instances of discrepancies in their demographic surveys, so I had the opportunity to ask questions as to why those discrepancies occurred and was able to clarify the answers.

Informal interviewing (Bernard, 2006, pp. 210-211) is preferenced at the beginning of a field work experience to assist a researcher in acclimating to her research surroundings. It is often used to generate conversations, built rapport, and generate new areas of interest that may have been overlooked while planning your initial study. The initial demographic process itself was a scheduled event that is structured by the survey itself, but the path that data was going to create was unknown and was intentionally framed as being relatively informal. Informal interviewing can be viewed as deceptive at times (Bernard, 2006, p. 211), especially if I were lurking in dark corners and using deception techniques to clutch to the pretenses of light, casual conversation, but my participants were aware of my presence and knew that our conversations had a purpose.

I interviewed each participant couple first as individuals, and then together as a couple. The other member of the couple was not home at the time of the interview in order to provide a sense of privacy. The interviews were semi-structured in nature, based on information collected from the demographic surveys and a brief list of questions that I had before starting the interview with the couple. Some of the basic questions I asked of each participant couple can be found in Table 2.

List of Semi-Structured Interview Questions
• Please tell me the story of how you met. (Narrative) • What do you think that says about you as a couple, and the ways in which you as a couple identify with food? (Narrative) • How do you feel that your interactions with food and eating have changed since living with your partner? (Contrast) • How have your habits changed? Have you developed any new routines or habits? (Contrast) • How would other people or couples describe you and your partner through the food you eat? (Circular) • Who typically does the cooking? Shopping? (Structural) • How do you feel about your household duties? (Evaluative) • How do you plan meals? Do you have a list/plan/recipe? (Evaluative) • What are foods that you now cook often upon moving in with your partner, or routines that you've developed especially for your partner? (Comparative) • Tell me about the process of moving in together. (Process) • What's been easier or harder, in terms of living with your partner, than you thought? (Narrative/Evaluative)

Table 2: List of Semi-Structured Interview Questions

The list of questions became rather concrete after I concluded interviews with the first participant couple. I initially felt that the themes of the interviews would vary from couple to couple, but sticking to a set of questions I made sure provided continuity between couples. However, follow up questions to clarify what was shared did vary from couple to couple. Unstructured interviewing is often used in situations where time is unlimited, and interviewing can occur on several separate occasions during extensive fieldwork opportunities. However, time

is only one element of unstructured interviewing; the goal of unstructured interviewing is to give participants the opportunity to open up, relax, and feel comfortable in their environments, and divulge information in their own ways and at their own pace (Bernard, 2006, p. 211-213). My goal was not to document the process of adjusting to a shared lifestyle, rather to capture the participants' reflections on the process, so spending more time with my participants seemed unnecessary to answer the research questions. However, I wanted the interactions with my participants to take the spirit of an unstructured interview, with its feelings of limitless time, situated in a comfortable setting, where sharing was facilitated.

Daly (2007) stresses the importance of interviewing couples together in order to "gain an appreciation for how they perceived their experience in both similar and different ways but also as a means to observe how they jointly constructed their reality together" (p. 180).

In summary, it was important to interview the couple together, as well as individually, because my primary research question deals with learning the ways in which the couple perceives their shared living experience, both as an individual adapting to the coupled environment and the couple adapting to the coupled environment. Therefore, it was necessary to speak to my participants as individuals to gain insight into individual perspectives, and to speak with them as a couple for a coupled perspective.

Phase 3: Home Tour

After the individual interview was complete, I asked my participants to give me a tour of the home. Observing the ways in which a physical environment (the home and kitchen, specifically) supports or interferes with behaviors (those that are food and eating related) led to a better understanding of the potential side effects a specific space may have on those behaviors (Zeisel, 2006, pp. 191-192). Environmental side effects varied but all carried a central theme of impeding

kitchen related work due to size or poor design. Seeing the layout of the home space and watching the ways in which couples interact and coexist in the home space allowed me to generate data about behavioral opportunities and constraints that each home space provided.

During the home tours, I asked questions about the home, the couples' relationship, food practices, and probed for more exhaustive responses based on clues provided during the demographic survey and individual interview. The questions were ultimately driven by those two previous interactions and immediate observations I made while in the home. See Table 3 for a general list of the kinds of questions that were asked during the home tour.

Home Tour Interview Questions
• Please give me a tour of your home and living areas.(Descriptive) • Where do you spend most of your time here? (Structural) • If you were living without your partner, how would [this space] look? (Comparative) • Where do you typically eat your meals while at home? (Structural) • What are your responsibilities at home relating to food and eating? (Structural)

Table 3: Home Tour Interview Questions

During the home tours, I also took photographs. The photographs had one main purpose: to preserve a richer picture of the home environment. First, I wanted a way to remember the layout of the house as it was when I visited, and a visual inventory of the items in the home. I asked the couple for permission to take photographs before the tour began. The photos assisted me in understanding the physical environment in which my couples lived and functioned. As the home tour progressed, I drew a rough floor plan of the living space and the path we took on the tour.

Strategies to Ensure Research Quality

The underlying qualities of an IPA researcher are "open-mindedness; flexibility; patience; empathy; and the willingness to enter into, and respond to, the participant's world"

(Smith et al., 2009, p. 55), but adhering to these traits is often not enough to ensure that the data collected is not analyzed in an unfitting manner.

Member checks are often used as a way to establish consistency in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) advocate the use of member checking as a final step in the analysis process. However, there is no directive in interpretative research to do so, and the study and its overall findings would not benefit from asking participant couples to read over findings or verify analysis. The process is especially tricky due to the phenomenological, hermeneutic nature of the research, analysis, and findings. IPA does not mention instances of member-checking as one of the strategies of this iterative and inductive cycle of analysis (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 79).

I chose not to engage in member checks because Smith et al. (2009) made no positive mention of the method and referred to two articles by Flowers (2008) and McConnell-Henry, Chapman & Francis (2011). In these articles, the authors communicated some potential issues that could arise when revisiting participants for clarification during interpretative studies. If a participant couple is asked to revisit a particular part of their interview and comment on a specific theme, the participants may believe that the researcher thinks that concept is especially important and may overemphasize its importance in turn.

Overall, the nature of IPA is not to generalize or prove; rather, it is my presentation of my understanding of my participants' lived experiences. Therefore, it is also illogical to have another researcher read and confirm or deny my account of my experiences with my participants (McConnell-Henry, Chapman & Francis, 2011, p. 28). Smith, Flowers, & Larkin (2009, p 183-184) do suggest maintaining careful records so that someone could follow the chain of evidence that leads from initial documentation through to the final report. An independent researcher who

has no familiarity with the research should be able to follow the trail from start to finish and do a check that would assert that the final report is plausible based on a step-by-step path through the chain of evidence. In opposition to inter-rater reliability (for quantitative research) or a peer checker who would read the study to see if he or she would come to the same conclusions, the independent audit is designed to allow for the possibility of a number of legitimate accounts of a given study and evaluate how systematically and transparently this particular account has been produced.

Transferability.

The cases that were generated through this research are transferable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) in that they are potentially useful as guidance on use of IPA in a similar research setting; however, the research is not meant to be transferrable or generalizable to a large population. Each case provides valuable insight into that particular couple and encourages the development of more studies that look in-depth at a select population. This study draws its strength from its attention to detail and dedication to understanding unique experiences. Conducting a study with this design strengthens the case for designing similar studies in the future with these methods in public health, health education, and cultural studies. Smith et al. (2009) illustrated that using the foundations of IPA in application to other research contexts, from psychology to health to general sociocultural research designs, will aid in understanding human behavior.

Credibility.

The balance of power is inevitably in the researcher's favor. Therefore, considering ways to limit and balance the power differential between the researcher and the participants is an important element. One step that I am taking to balance power is by attending to the recommendations of Smith et al. (2009) on how to design for a study that is ethical through

'sustained reflection and review' (p 53). I informed my participants of the structure of the study and explained what was required of them all throughout their participation. Lastly, and most importantly, I addressed potential power differentials by asking my participants to lead the home tour and tell me about their lives together without asking too many questions that would lead the conversation.

Dependability.

Through my initial exploratory study, and throughout the course of this research project, I refined my understanding of the couples' experiences and began to generate hypotheses as to how the couples build and maintain relationships through food. People's relationships with food are constantly changing and evolving, sometimes quite literally with every bite, and concepts of replication are not possible, nor really desired. I was diligent in accounting for changes I saw as the project progressed and learned from those evolutions by being reflexive about the process, the phenomena I observed and how my own presuppositions and predilections painted the results (Daly, 2007).

Navigation.

It is important to track the ways in which I navigate through my data in order to remind myself of the decisions I have made along the way. I did this through extensive note taking in the form of field notes, reflective and reflexive journaling, and annotating interview transcriptions with notes taken during interviews. I referred to a guiding list of interview questions and took notes after interviews that pertain to each of the guiding questions. Additionally, I took photographs during the home tours to help me to remember the environment in which my participants spend their daily lives.

Approach for Presenting Analysis & Results

There are two recommended approaches to analyzing and writing up an IPA study. First, there is the ideographic case-study approach, which is often termed the basic method. The method is suitable for smaller samples up to 10 participants, and permits the researcher to write up each case individually and explore the themes shared between cases (Smith & Osborn, 1997, p. 648). The second method is primarily used to develop a theoretical explanation or model or framework through which to explain a phenomenon rather than writing about it in-depth (Smith, 1996).

The ideographic case-study approach was best suited for this study based on the selection of the participants and the overall goal of the research, which is to reach an in-depth understanding of the everyday food experiences of couples who are adapting to a shared lifestyle. For all IPA studies, it is not helpful to think of more participants as being better in terms of satisfying ideas; more interviews may not result in a correct or complete interpretation of the lived experiences of participants (McConnell-Henry, Chapman & Francis, 2009, p. 32; Smith et al., 2009, p. 53).

Smith et al. (2009) have different suggestions for writing up findings based on the scale of the study being conducted. One way to approach writing up findings for a project of this scale is to think of the findings as two related but self-contained studies. Each participant couples' data was examined in great detail and the data enabled a micro-analysis of the similarities and differences across cases, as well as an in-depth understanding of the ways in which each couple made sense of their experiences of moving in together and settling in to new household routines.

The studies contained within this project involve examining the ways in which couples adapting to a shared lifestyle divide food-related household labor. More specifically, the ways in

which couples delegated the task of dinner preparation is examined in close detail. The second study discusses the development of the role of the nutritional gatekeeper in couples adapting to a shared lifestyle, and further investigates the future implications of the development of this role.

Summary

IPA stresses the importance of a triangulated, theoretical approach to data collection, analysis and consideration; grounding in a theoretically phenomenological perspective, the iterative process of the hermeneutic circle, and attention to the particular. Putting these theoretical perspectives into practice requires flexibility, time to reflect, and a dedication to making sense of the experiences of participants through exploration, description, interpretation, and the position of a particular event or process (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 40).

Smith et al. (2009) make a strong case for the in-depth analysis of individual cases using a "quasi-judicial" (p. 31) approach to assess and evaluate each case on its own merits with the eventual goal of considering the cases in relation to one another. Bromley (1985) describes the type of data evolving from this approach as being "highly circumscribed accounts of persons in situations, giving rise to low level generalizations within relatively narrow areas of scientific and professional interest" (p. 8). IPA is typically described as being "an iterative and inductive process" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 79) that encourages a healthy amount of analytic flexibility when approaching your data. The focus should always remain on how my participants make sense of their experiences. The kinds of data collected, as described above, allowed me to keep a commitment to understand the perspective or point of view of my participants and explore meaning making from within the context of a relationship in flux. Smith, Flowers & Larkin (2009) recommend the following strategies for data analysis:

• “Line by line analysis of the experiential claims, concerns, and understandings of each participant” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 79)

• Identification of emergent patterns in a single case, and eventually across cases, focusing specifically on commonalities and differences within single cases first

• “Development of a ‘dialogue’ between the researchers and their coded data” in order to attempt to “understand what it might mean for participants to have these concerns, in this context, leading in turn to the development of a more interpretative account” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 79)

• Organizing all data into a format which allows for easy auditing for yourself and by other researchers

• The development of a full narrative that takes the reader through my interpretation, theme-by-theme, with the aid of a visual guide or map for an overall guide through the data

• Time for reflection on one’s own “perceptions, conceptions and processes” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 80).

Lastly, Smith et al., (2009) warn that while it is smart to have a repertoire of strategies, IPA isn’t about following a set of steps to a perfect ending. IPA is an approach, or a sensibility, and the development of steps aids only in making my own thoughts and processes more visible and therefore easier to follow both for me and others reading my account; the guidelines helped me stay on track. I knew my first steps would align with Smith, Flowers & Larkin’s (2009) suggestions to start with the case that I find most interesting and engaging and analyze it in great detail by reading, re-reading, and noting with descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual comments, and summarizing. Next, I looked for emergent themes in the data, knowing that with each stage of analysis, I started including more and more of my life world into the stories I was telling, and

then arrived at a collaborative understanding of my participant's lived experience. I read the data for connections across emergent themes, and eventually moved on to the next case, and started looking for patterns across cases.

In summary, the general framework for this study follows Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) and its recommended methods for data collection and analysis (Flowers, 2008; Smith, 1996; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborne, 2003). An interpretative, phenomenological perspective is important to this study because I examined the lived experiences of my participants and the ways in which they make sense of their experiences. My overall goal is to note, in detail, the "existence, not incidence" (Yin, 1989, p. 4), of food-related experiences and practices of newly cohabiting couples adapting to a shared lifestyle through interviews, home tours, and a short demographic survey, all conducted in the participants' homes.

CHAPTER 4: DIVISION OF FOOD-RELATED LABOR IN COUPLES ADAPTING TO A SHARED LIFESTYLE

Introduction

The results of this study better help us understand the ways in which couples adapt to a shared lifestyle upon moving in together through their food-related behaviors. This chapter presents and discusses the main themes that emerged from the interviews conducted with each participant couple. The participant couples are introduced by presenting their demographic characteristics and a short contextual description of each participant couple.

All of the themes identified are ones that I, as the researcher, helped develop through my own life experiences. Through the research process of interviewing and observing, the participant couples and I came to a shared understanding of their life experiences as they were told to me at a certain time and place in their lives, and was translated and digested by me at a certain time and point in my life. Essentially, I used my own life lens to understand the participant couple's life experiences. These themes do not represent an ultimate truth, either of my or their design; instead, the themes are possible interpretations emerging from my perspective as a researcher observing and interacting with my participants, through the information they chose to share. The themes identified, explored, and interpreted in this chapter are not absolutes.

The themes highlighted in this chapter are central to the experiences of my four participant couples and provide significant answers to the major research question concerning how couples make sense of their food work responsibilities by describing the division of food-related tasks upon living together. Although the participant couples all have unique experiences central to them and their specific set of circumstances, each couple is sharing a similar set of circumstances in terms of the stage at which they are currently in in their relationships. Each

account was unique to the couples and provided them with an opportunity to present their unique set of circumstances.

Overall Description of Themes

An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the transcribed data, field notes, direct observations, and photographs yielded two superordinate themes: Considering Past Experiences in a Present Context and The Process of Dividing Food-related Household Responsibilities. Each of the superordinate themes generated a variety of subordinate themes illustrating participant couples' experiences of dividing household labor as a means of adapting to a shared lifestyle (as presented in Table 4).

All accounts made strong reference to the impact moving in together had on their daily routines and their efforts to adjust to living together. These impacts could be most readily viewed through domestic housework. However, this study focuses exclusively on the ways in which these couples set up their kitchen spaces for food work and the process by which domestic work was divided. The participant couples were able to articulate the process of settling in to living together through stories about their food-related experiences in their newly altered home spaces. In the following sections, I describe each superordinate theme along with related subordinate themes that I gathered from interview transcripts. Then, I provide examples from the couples' experiences.

Superordinate Themes		Subordinate Themes	
1	Considering Past Experiences in a Present Context	1a	Past Living Experiences
2	Process of Dividing Food-related Household Responsibilities	2a	Perceptions of Time and Skill
		2b	Discussing, Trading and Exchanging Tasks
		2c	Avoiding Tasks

Table 4: Superordinate and Subordinate Themes from Data Analysis

Considering Past Experience in a Present Context

One major recurring theme throughout all of my conversations with my participants was the past. Discussions about the present or the future could not be had without comparisons being made to past living experiences. These past living experiences ranged from living alone, living at home with parents or roommates, or living with other previous romantic partners. Some accounts pertained more to food-related behaviors in those living circumstances, while others discussed the transition between living with roommates and living with a romantic partner. Considering past experiences is a significant overarching theme because these past experiences served as a reference point in guiding the participant couples during the transitional time of living in a new or altered environment with a new person. Thinking of the ways in which a past experience was handled aided in navigating a current situation that a person was experiencing.

Past Living Experiences

Most of my participants had lived alone at some point since childhood. The transition to living with a romantic partner involved determining whether to share a brand new space, or move in with the other partner. Living alone meant sole responsibility for bills, household chores, and eating. Previous experiences living with past boyfriends or girlfriends or partner

were mostly negative. Living with roommates carried a different set of rules than really sharing a space with someone with which you are romantically involved.

When each couple decided that they were going to move in together, the next challenge was deciding where to move. There were many options, for instance, the couple could find a new place to move into together, or one person could move in with the other, or in with friends or family. Fred and Lissa each owned their own homes, and Lissa ended up moving in with Fred and renting out her home. Molly and Jack each had their own apartments and were living alone prior to moving in with one another, and Jack left his apartment empty and moved in with Molly. Tara was living with her parents out of town, and Chad was living in a studio apartment, alone, on a college campus. Chad found an apartment for the two of them to move in to together. Nathan was living in his parents' lake house out of town, and Erica was living with a now platonic ex-boyfriend. They considered evicting the ex-boyfriend roommate and having Nathan move into Erica's apartment, but ultimately they decided to get a new place that they could pick out together.

For Chad, moving in with Tara meant that he needed to acquire an apartment with more space, while still staying on a tight budget. They opted to find a new place for them both to live. He was in charge of finding a place for them to live, since Tara was living out of town at the time at her parent's home. Before moving in with Tara, Chad had lived alone in a studio apartment. Chad and Tara had never lived in the same town, and were not accustomed to seeing each other on a daily basis, and he was now facing the challenge of anticipating Tara's daily needs, and satisfying her family's expectations.

> I didn't really like original place. I mean, um, I was in the, it was pretty much the furthest from, um, the apartment furthest away from the campus while still being on campus…. that one, that one was slightly cheaper it was, like a $50 difference effectively, and for the extra fifty bucks having, effectively what's a small house

> [opposed to say] a little apartment. Tiff's parents they are originally from Taiwan and they were very keen on making sure that we didn't, sort of, splash out more money than we needed to. I think they were keen on me keeping it cheap for us. So I did. --*Chad*

Nathan had lived with a partner in the past, and it was a negative experience for him. Erica discussed her perspective on the conversation they had leading up to their decision to get a whole new place that they got to pick out together that did not contain any memories of an ex-boyfriend. Erica defaulted to Nathan's experiences living with a romantic partner, since she had never lived with a romantic partner before.

> I mean, I still felt like it was my apartment, but I felt like we were comfortable making that transition. I had also never lived with a partner before, but Jack had, so he had some reservations. That serious relationship didn't work out, so he had some reservations about like moving in with somebody, but I don't really know like how he got over that. I'll have to talk to him about that. --*Erica*

Nathan discussed his experiences living with his previous girlfriend, and the impact it had on his decision to move in with Erica. He relied on his past negative experience and feelings with his previous girlfriend to inform his behaviors, thoughts, and feelings in his new relationship with Erica.

> Like, the last woman I lived with, like, she was very much like, I'm gonna do my thing and you're gonna do your thing and like, Erica does the laundry and like, I do, I clean the bathroom and I vacuum, and she cleans this and so and so forth, so like it kind of fell into a more natural distribution. Erica is much more easygoing and it just felt right to move in with her. --*Nathan*

The decision to live in a new space or share a partner's space was often complicated by the living situation a person was currently in at the time of deciding to move in together. Just prior to Nathan and Erica moving in together, Erica lived with an ex-boyfriend. Erica and the ex-boyfriend planned on moving in together while they dated, but their romantic relationship ended just after they signed a lease together. They decided to move in together even though they were not romantically involved anymore, and as far as Erica was concerned, they were amicable

roommates. When Erica started dating Nathan, and Nathan started staying in the apartment for extended weekends, Erica's roommate became hostile.

> So, Elijah and I had just broken up, and we had kind of been talking about moving in together, which was like, so bizarre to me at the time. I was like, oh [so terrible], why did I think that? But he proposed that we still do it. He was like, well, we split kind of amicably. We could do it. And it was, so yeah, we went and signed a lease and then moved in like four months after we had broken up. . At one point, my old roommate had offered to let Nathan to sublet his bedroom, but Nathan and I wanted our own place. So, we went, and we told Klaus all of this and he flipped out and like yelled at me and like got in my face and it was really ugly. --*Erica*

Jack and Molly were living in their own apartments without roommates, with both apartments being close to their workplaces. Molly spoke with me about the process of moving from one apartment to the other and the logic that was used to decide whose apartment they would live in rather than getting a new place:

> And we had talked about like, moving in together, and like, living together in the future, and all that. And he, he's always said, like, there's no way I would want us, as a couple to live in [Town B], but he wants to keep his job. So he says like, he wants to commute, but he really wants us to live in [Town A], 'cause he loves [Town A], and he says he likes my apartment better than his. So that's kind of how we ended up here. --*Molly*

Molly was sure that her apartment would be big enough for her and Jack. Her primary concern was making sure Jack felt comfortable moving into her apartment, and that the space felt like it was "theirs" not "hers." Jack put many of his belongings into storage because Molly's apartment already had all of the items a household would need to operate. Molly recalled that she has lived with boyfriends in the past and they have chosen a new place together, so setting up the home space was more about "comingling" and might be more "fair" than one person moving in to another person's already established home.

> I want him to feel like it's his home, you know, and not like he's a guest, or he's staying here, like, I want it to feel like his. Because I've lived with people, like, I've lived with boyfriends in the past, and I've done it both ways, like, where you both, where you get a place and like you both move together, so it's like the co-

> mingling and it's fair? And then I've done it like where it was like his place and I've moved in and like you just don't really feel like it's your, you know, it's just different. So I try, like I don't want him to feel like that. --*Molly*

Jack's philosophy is similar to Molly's in that he recognizes that he is living in a shared space again, rather than on his own, and in a shared space certain considerations need to be followed in order to foster a warm and inviting environment.

> I think it's just how it's always been. Like, with me I'm more, I guess I'm not, I'm more relaxed about like, OK this is where it's going to be, I don't have to worry about somebody coming in and change it. And here it's been like, well, it's shared space so we need to sort of work this out. Like before, I'm just like, well, it's my place and it is what it is. --*Jack*

Three of the participant couples referenced past living situations in order to prepare for living with their current significant other, and made adjustments to their behaviors this time in order to accommodate for previous negative experiences, or made sure to be considerate of their partner's physical, emotional, and financial needs upon moving in together. One couple (Tara and Chad) had yet to undergo this process of reflection.

Thinking about what was done in the past, and relying on that experience to navigate the present, can have mixed results. Experiences, however, give couples a place to begin when putting their new lives together, and discussing those past experiences openly can create avenues for conversation about other expectations, wants, and needs. Acting in accordance with past experiences without considering the present context can be an initial source of stress for couples, and this stress can carry on into other aspects of the relationship.

Process of Dividing Food-related Household Responsibilities

The actual process of dividing food-related household responsibilities varied from couple to couple, but there were some central themes that were shared with the other couples in the study. Initially, I identified what I thought to be the development of some sort of system for

dividing these tasks in the households. At first, I was looking for characteristics of what I would consider a system, like creating a list for grocery shopping, an assignment of a task to a certain person, or a schedule for when tasks are to be completed or a to-do list. I soon realized that I was looking for indicators of a system that my partner and I have created over the past eleven years of our relationship, and not necessarily the indicators of a system for each of the participant couples. Even if the couples themselves do not recognize the formation of a system in their lives, they are navigating their lives under some sort of mode of operation and I needed to step back and consider the different ways in which the participant couples were starting to establish food-related household responsibilities.

Erica and Nathan talked cogently about the implementation of their system and the ways in which they have developed it over time. Erica spoke candidly, wondering what Nathan thought of the system that has been developed. In this case, Erica was talking more broadly about their household tasks, and then more specifically about a combined to-do and grocery list that she had introduced. The list was a pad of lined paper that had a magnet glued on its' back so it could be placed on the refrigerator.

> I would be interested to hear what he has to say about this system because I think it works. And we, it was like a process we like worked through together. But he, he's not one to like really express his discontent with much, so. Yea. I put it, um [pause], when you see the fridge, almost all the shit on the fridge is mine…I started using it [a to-do list/grocery list] more myself at first. And then he would say can you pick up this. And I was like oh yea sure, can you just put it on the list, it's on the fridge. It's become a, like, a very standard thing. --*Erica*

Erica assumed that Nathan's use of the list meant that he approved of the list. It seemed as though the list was never really discussed as something to introduce into their shared lives; rather, Erica took an organizational tool from her own life and implemented into the household. When asked about the ways in which he thought the tasks in the household were divided, Nathan

appeared puzzled at first, and compared his current living situation with Erica to that of a past girlfriend.

> Um. [pause] Well, I don't know, I guess we split the chores up easier than usual. Like, the last woman I lived with, like, she was very much like, I'm gonna do my thing and you're gonna do your thing and like, Erica does the laundry and I clean the bathroom and I vacuum, and she cleans this and so and so forth, so like it kind of fell into a more natural distribution. But we keep a list and if we need something we put it on the list. It's more free spirited I guess. --*Nathan*

Molly also introduced a list system into their lives upon Jack moving into her apartment. She also keeps the list on a pad of paper with a magnet affixed to the back so it will stick to the fridge. She writes grocery items that she needs to pick up, since she is the primary shopper, but she will also list items that Jack should pick up on his way home from work. Molly is the primary grocery shopper, but Jack holds a membership at a bulk warehouse store and will often stop on his way home from work to pick up specific items that she has requested from the store.

During my interview with Molly, she noticed that Jack had cleared off a pile of papers that he had left on the kitchen counter. She is “not a fan” of papers being left out, and she theorized that since Jack knew I was coming over to interview her, he tried to tidy up any messes he might have left behind. She saw what he had done, and picked up the pile of papers that he had placed in a magazine bin, and looked through them. She stopped when she saw a hand written list of items on a scrap piece of paper, sighed, and said, “I guess this is the list of things he needed me to get but I don’t know what good it does him here.”

It was clear that Molly was confused, and perhaps a bit annoyed, that Jack had not written those items on her list on the fridge. She had introduced a list system into the household that he had yet to fully adopt. I asked Jack about the list system and asked if he ever wrote things he needed on the paper on the fridge, and he explained:

> Yeah, I write on there if she's like, "If you want something add it, so I'll be like, "You know, are you going to the store tomorrow?" or something along those lines

and she says, "Yeah, just write it on the list," so I'll put like bagels down. So this is easy. This was her organization. --*Jack*

Jack believed he had adapted to Molly's organizational system for gathering supplies for the household, but based on Molly's reaction to the list she found in his stack of papers, it seemed like she might think that he has yet to fully adapt. To me, it seemed like he had written the list elsewhere, perhaps at work, but had yet to transfer the list to her notepad on the fridge.

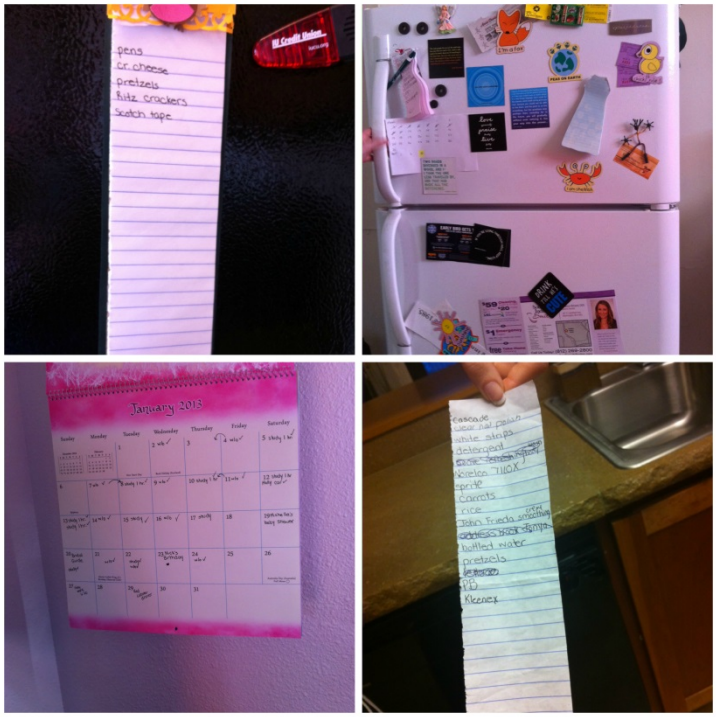

Figure 2: Examples of lists: top left, Molly's list. Top right, Erica's fridge featuring two pads of paper with magnets, bottom left, Molly's calendar to help organize schedules, bottom right Molly's list a week later.

Molly also mentioned that she felt that she and Jack took time to discuss the structure of their shared lives before moving in together, and that they have continued those conversations throughout their relationship. It was sometimes difficult for Molly to get Jack to talk about what he was feeling, especially if he was having some frustrations at work. Jack felt as though he should not bring stress from work to their home, but he believed he was communicative when it came to discussing their current lives and their future. Molly thought that because she and Jack

worked at keeping the lines of communication open, and discussed the kinds of organization she would like to implement in their lives, living together had been a relatively effortless transition:

> Like, if you were a little bit more, I don't know, less willing to commute and come home and, and kind of pitch in that that might cause some problems, but, because you've kind of worked it out and talked about it that's, that's been OK so far. --*Molly*

The list system is just one example of the ways in which the participant couples had tried to organize their lives upon living together. To-do lists and shopping lists in these examples were organized by the person put in charge of shopping in their respective relationships (Molly and Erica).

The following sections will go into greater detail regarding the ways in which the participant couples approached the division of labor in the household and how those approaches were specifically applied to food-related household tasks.

Perceptions of time & skill.

All participants mentioned a lack of time as a factor that impeded cooking at home. Having a lack of time was a matter of perspective and was a way to get out of being responsible for cooking dinners in the evenings. Each couple was able to identify the person who was "primarily responsible" for preparing meals. For the most part, the couples prepared their own breakfasts and lunches and did not have those meals together. Dinner was the only meal that was almost always shared and eaten at home.

For Jack and Molly, Jack's hour long commute each day caused him to leave before Molly gets up to go to work, and get back after Molly is done at work. Because of this, both Jack and Molly perceived that Molly had more time at home, and therefore, more time to prepare dinner. This was especially true when Jack stopped off at the gym to exercise before heading home in the evenings. Before Jack moved in with Molly, she ordered carry out almost every

evening for dinner, and also ordered in to her office for lunch. When Jack moved in, Molly continued to order carry out, but now it was for two people instead of just her. Jack expressed a desire to eat more home cooked meals, and since Molly was in charge of ordering the carry out, and she was not commuting every day, the implication was that Molly needed to cook at home more often.

> When we moved in together, like I would cook more at home than I previously did, because there's someone to cook for and all that. But um, but we still got carryout more than Jack previously did. So there came a point where he was like, um, could we try to cook at home more? And at first I was like, well, you're asking me to cook at home more because you're not the one who does it, so this is like all effort on my part. You know, so I kind of was like, so I didn't really say anything, 'cause I was like, okay, I need to think if my feelings are really fair, before I'm like of course you would want that, no skin off your back. You know? So I thought about it, and I'm like, well, that's a reasonable request, even if like most of the work does fall to me. So I've like really been trying and I think we've done a lot better. So… and it makes sense, we did get carryout a lot. --*Molly*

Molly communicated that she did not want to be responsible for cooking, but she felt that it was her responsibility to cook because Jack had requested that she cook from home more. Molly and Jack both explained that it was Molly who was to cook because of her perceived availability and skill. However, Molly is still ordering carryout for about four dinners a week. She mentioned that she likes cooking more now because she is cooking for another person, but it seemed like she wanted to be able to cook when she had the desire to cook, and did not have an obligation to cook.

Tara and Chad were both in graduate programs, but were taking different courses, causing hectic schedules that do not often align during the daytime. They did spend most evenings together, but no one was put in charge for making a meal for the two of them to share. Tara and Chad both agreed that if something is going to be cooked from scratch, Chad would most likely to do that, but they often do not have the same meal at the same time for dinner. They preferred to prepare something for themselves when they were hungry, on an individual basis.

My perception of their perceptions is that they are both graduate students, and neither of them thinks that one person has more time than the other, so they each fend for themselves when it comes to food.

Jack and Molly were both young professionals in full time jobs. Tara and Chad were both graduate students. Fred was also a graduate student, but he is pursuing a Ph.D. Lissa was a full time employee at a desk job, but put in her two-weeks-notice right around the time she was interviewed for this study. Fred and Lissa were in a transitional period of their lives, more so than the other couples, because of the job transitions, their impending marriage, and emergency maintenance work being done on the plumbing in their only bathroom. Lissa felt that she had more time recently to take over the cooking responsibilities because she recently quit her job and felt that she should be the one cooking dinner, but Fred usually insists that he take charge of dinner because he usually works from home when he is not on campus teaching or in meetings. Since they felt that they were equally available to cook, they had fallen into a system that worked well for them at that point in their lives:

> *Natalie*: How often do you cook together?
>
> *Fred*: Three or four times a week. Last night, she made dinner. I came out and we had dinner and then I did the dishes. Vice versa happens quite often. We cook together pretty often. She'll make one part of the meal, like the vegetables, and I'll do the protein. That's about as together as you can get, otherwise you'll get in each other's way.

With Fred and Lissa, an equal amount of perceived free time in the evenings has led them to collaborate on their evening meals. However, even though these roles and tasks have been assigned at this point in time, the assignments can change over time depending on the schedules of the couple involved. If Lissa were to get a new job that kept her at work later in the evening, Fred may have to become responsible for cooking dinner every night. Since Fred and Lissa felt that they were both capable of cooking dinner, having one person cook over the other does not

seem to be an issue in their relationship because they believe that they each have equal skill levels when it comes to cooking. Fred shared that Lissa was still learning to cook, but he was confident that whatever she makes "would be just fine" but it might take her a little longer to get dinner on the table. Lissa had a persistent case of a lack in confidence:

> I know that three teaspoons are one tablespoon. She doesn't know that. It's pretty funny when we interact in the kitchen. She says, "We need a pint," I'm like, "You need two cups." When we cook together, that sometimes will happen. She's more of a recipe person. Whenever she's cooking, she would like a recipe to state the exact amounts [of ingredients]. When we're cooking together, she says, 'The recipe says to use 2 ounces of sugar,' I'm like, 'No, you can just use a tablespoon.' That stresses her out a little bit. --*Fred*

The overall perception of a "good cook" was a person who can make tasty food without a recipe. Erica felt this way about Nathan's cooking because she could ask him to make something like biscuits and gravy for breakfast, and he could easily make the biscuits and the sausage gravy from scratch without referencing a recipe and deliver it to her without any effort on her part. Erica did not feel that she had the ability to do that, and therefore, Nathan was the better cook. Jack also felt that he could read a recipe and cook if required, but thought Molly was more experienced in the kitchen because she did not mind substituting ingredients if something was not immediately available to her in the kitchen. Erica and Nathan had an exchange during their coupled interview that illustrates this point:

> *Erica*: I had one of Rachael Ray's cookbooks, but...her recipes have too many ingredients. I'm like a seven ingredient woman.
>
> *Nathan*: Oh really? See, I feel like I just throw in random stuff and use the recipe as a suggestion for proportions, and think, "I bet this will taste good."

In order to better understand the process of determining perceived time and skill, I want to go into further detail about a part of Erica and Nathan's lives that they shared with me during their individual and coupled interviews. Erica felt that at the beginning of their relationship, Nathan was trying to "woo" her by cooking all of the time, and she expected that his cooking

routine would continue upon moving in together. Nathan explained that whenever he starts dating someone, it is customary to go out to eat and participate in fun activities as a way to get to know each other, but as their relationship became more serious, he wanted to scale back on spending money eating out. Because he was commuting to and from campus, Nathan would often stay with Erica for extended weekends to avoid commuting and spend more time with her. As a result, he had access to her kitchen space and could cook for her. Nathan explains further:

> In fact like, she didn't cook at all at the beginning. Like I would go over to her house and cook dinner. Uh, and then she learned to cook a lot since we've been dating. Um, I don't think we go out very much these days. When I have like a publication deadline or something and she gets tired of cooking every meal we might go out a couple nights a week but I feel like if we go out more than two or three nights a week we're like uh this is too much and we need to slow down.
> --*Nathan*

Upon moving in together, Erica has taken over most of the cooking responsibilities because of Nathan's busy academic schedule. Nathan stated, "She's done a lot of the cooking the last six months because I've stayed out working on my dissertation a lot." When Nathan would visit on the weekends, she had his full attention and the time they spent together was more focused on courting rather than daily living. Now that Nathan and Erica live together, their schedules have started to form a more synchronous arrangement and the focus is on daily living rather than special meeting times. Erica now experiences Nathan's day-to-day life and living together has changed the ways in which Erica and Nathan interact with food because of those every day interactions.

In the past, Erica and Nathan would have seen to their own hunger while they were living apart. For Erica, that means heating up a frozen burrito in the microwave. For Jack, that means making a gallon of soup to eat for the week. Now that they are living together, Erica and Nathan are discovering that not only are their approaches to food different, but a whole host of other

variables are complicating a daily routine that before had seemingly no conflict associated with it.

Erica felt strongly about scheduled mealtimes and since she was in charge of cooking for the time being, she tried to have dinner ready by seven on the evenings she cooked. Nathan ate when he was hungry, so eating according to a schedule was difficult for him to incorporate into his daily activities. Erica liked making breakfast on the weekends, and she expected Nathan to join her, but he felt that big breakfasts were "not the greatest use of calories" and often he was not hungry in the mornings and would not have a natural urge to eat. Because Erica expected to share breakfast with Nathan on the weekends, he felt obligated to eat what she prepared because "it's important to her to eat meals together, and I can't just sit out here [the dining room] and watch her eat and then have me not eat…it's creepy."

In Erica and Nathan's relationship, there seemed to be a tension between what Erica's expectations for meals and meal time behaviors. She felt that there were appropriate times to have meals and that since they are living together their meals need to be shared. Nathan did not share these feelings, so often went about his regular daily routines and neglected these obligations that Erica has created in their relationship. There was a divide between Nathan and Erica's approaches to food and mealtimes that caused their food-related tasks to be assigned in a particular way:

> *Nathan*: I used to make dinner all the time and now it's gotten to the point where like, I cook when I want to, and then, she does it when I don't. Which is actually really nice and occasionally she'll say like, "Can you make this?" But I feel like there's not much delineation of responsibilities these days. It's like, I'm like, "Oh, I'm want to make this tonight," and I make it and then like, if I don't have anything I want to make then like, occasionally you'll suggest I make something, most of the time you'll just go make something. <Laughing, looking at *Erica* with a grin> What?
>
> *Erica*: Well, 'cause I feel like, if I don't make something then we won't have any dinner.

While Nathan was talking, Erica's body language changed; she squinted her eyes at Nathan and tilted her head slightly to the left and raised her right eyebrow as if to suggest that what Nathan was saying was only his version of the truth. Erica expressed that she perceived Nathan's eating schedule to be disordered and was not congruent with her very ordered, timely eating schedule and if she tried to adjust to his eating schedule she would starve.

Erica expressed that she was "okay" with taking on the responsibility of being the primary grocery shopper and dinner maker for now, but hoped that when Nathan finishes his dissertation and obtains full time employment he will pick up the majority of cooking. In picking up the cooking again, I think Erica would expect Nathan to adjust to her time table for meals since it revolves around her very standard office job hours. Nathan cooked all meals nearly all the time when they first started their relationship but now that his schedule had become more hectic, and her schedule was the same every day, Erica has taken on those cooking responsibilities out of necessity. Because of schedules, household responsibilities like cooking can be traded or handed off to the other person in the relationship for a time. Erica shared her hopes for the future of her cooking duties:

> I would also say I wish that he would cook a little bit more, but I'm hoping that it's just, like, situational because he's working so much. And then when he gets, like, a full time job that he will have more free time. I don't really enjoy cooking. Like, I like baking. I bring baked goods to work because I have a very receptive audience. But cooking, it just doesn't grab me. --*Erica*

Erica seemed to be in a situation similar to that of Molly; the role of primary cook was thrust upon her, and she is begrudgingly accepting of that duty but if she really does not want to cook, she orders carry out. And, like Molly, if it is her responsibility to cook, she is going to cook foods that she likes, for instance meals that center around meat. These two women are cooking dinner because they feel an obligation to do so, based on their current living situations, and when that put-upon obligation becomes too much, they order carry out to fulfill the

obligation of providing dinner. Erica and Molly are growing fonder of cooking, but they would both like the luxury of cooking when they want to rather than this particular task being assigned to them every evening.

Even though Erica perceives herself to be the less skilled cook, and they both perceived Nathan to be the better cook all around, Erica was still in charge of cooking dinner most nights because she was perceived to have more time. When I first visited Erica and Nathan, Erica commented on a bundle of Swiss chard that had been in the refrigerator for over two weeks and had begun to rot. I asked her to tell me more about the decision to purchase the bunch of Swiss chard, and she stated that Nathan had decided that he wanted to go grocery shopping with her and he put the chard in the cart, insisting that he was going to cook it up for them for dinner one evening. He never did, leaving Erica to wonder what she was supposed to do with what was to her a very foreign ingredient.

> Yeah, it's like even if I figure out how to cook the chard, like do we just have like chard on a plate? Like then what? That's one of those things that I don't know how to prepare so - I could have made it but it's a lot of effort to figure out how to cook it, and he bought it, so that has to be one of the things that he makes. --*Erica*

In Molly and Jack's situation, it was perceived by both Jack and Molly that Molly had more time and skill, making Molly the most logical candidate to start cooking dinner at home on a regular basis. It made sense to Jack to suggest that Molly be in charge of the dinner task. Jack only knew how to make 3 or 4 meals, including frozen pizza, Shake 'n Bake chicken, chicken and rice, and spaghetti. Molly was not interested in eating those particular meals in a weekly rotation. Jack claims he would gladly help with the cooking responsibilities, but felt that Molly is particular about what she wants to eat, and had very specific cravings that she must fulfill. He did not want to let her down by cooking something she would not enjoy. For this couple, their logical argument was to default cooking responsibilities to the person who had a more particular

palate and better skill set for cooking. Although my interview questions did not particularly deal with gender roles and cooking, it would be interesting to include questions that would begin a conversation about the ways in which perceived gender roles were at play in determining food-related work in the home. I suspect that if a line of questioning about gender roles and cooking were presenting to Molly and Jack, there would be significant revelations about the ways in which each person believes a home should be organized according to gender.

In summary, the person who is assigned or accepts the role of dinner cook ideally has more free time and greater skill than their partner. More available time is a factor that is considered a priority over skill, even though someone with less skill might take more time to cook dinner, thereby taking up more time of the person with less skill than if the person with more perceived skill would have cooked the meal. If both partners feel that they do not have enough time to cook, neither cooks, and they each rely on themselves to prepare dinner. If each partner is perceived to have the same amount of time available to prepare dinner, it seemed to result in collaboration where both partners take over certain parts of the dinner time meal and prepare them accordingly and combine the separate dishes into one meal to be shared.

Discussing, trading & exchanging tasks.

Discussing or negotiating tasks involves taking over a duty in exchange for the other person doing a duty that both feel is equitable in labor or dislike. Erica and Nathan started talking about housework when Nathan helped Erica pack up her apartment to begin the process of moving to their new place:

> I think we were just walking around. I vaguely remember being in the bathroom and she was like, I was talking about cleaning or something because she didn't vacuum in the old place. And I think I vacuumed it several times when I visited. And then I helped her move out and I was cleaning up and there were like things that I was like, 'Did you *ever* clean this?' Like, the filters in the stove hood, they get all gross and you have to soak them. Or there were a few other things. And

> she was like, ‘No, I never clean that.’ And I'm like, ‘Well who's going to do the cleaning in this new house?’ And in gest she was like ‘I'll do anything but the bathroom.’ So I'm like, ‘Fine, I'll take the bathroom.’
>
> --*Nathan*

Erica and Nathan were able to have a preliminary discussion about who would be assuming what roles, and unlike Tara and Chad, each person knows what tasks are to be completed by whom. If Nathan did a task that was typically something Erica would do, they would both be aware that the person was doing the other person’s task. Because Nathan and Erica assigned their household tasks, they were better able to navigate the process of moving in together.

With three of the four couples, I noted that if one person cooked a dinner time meal, the other person offered to clean up the kitchen. This was the most common direct trade. Fred recalled a common scenario in their household involving Lissa cooking dinner and Fred cleaning. They cook together about three to four times a week, but Fred is usually in charge of the main dish and planning the meal. Lissa wanted to cook dinner for Fred because she felt that he had been “extra busy” with school work recently and she wanted to feel more useful around the house after quitting her job:

> Last night, she made dinner. I came out and we had dinner and then I did the dishes. Vice versa happens quite often. We cook together pretty often. She'll make one part of the meal, like the vegetables, and I'll do the protein. That's about as together as you can get, otherwise you'll get in each other's way. --*Fred*

Lissa and Fred also engaged in trading tasks throughout the house. A kitchen task can be traded for another house chore. This system works for Lissa and Fred because they both agree that tasks need to be assigned and completed in a reasonable amount of time. Unlike Tara and Chad, Fred and Lissa both have the same, unspoken definition of “reasonable time.”

> He doesn't love to vacuum. He does not love to dust. So I was like I would rather clean the toilets that unload the dishwasher. Cuz I'm just like ughhh I just did the cups and there's one more. *--Lissa*

Lissa and Fred had a candid conversation when they finally started living together after their summer abroad about household responsibilities. They spoke about the chores they dislike doing and ones that they do not mind doing; during this talk, they discovered that they both hate doing laundry, so they decided that it was fair that they each do their own laundry, and take turns doing household laundry, like sheets, towels, and blankets. Their tasks were assigned and they have performed those tasks per expectations.

The participant couples revealed to me that tasks can be traded or exchanged either on a regular basis or from the initial set up of the household. Several household tasks responsibilities are established upon moving in together, and when those responsibilities are not clearly assigned, such is the case with Tara and Chad, the lack of action on these tasks can be a source of strife.

Avoiding tasks.

Perhaps no single issue is of "greater importance" for couples in Western culture than the one of conflict. When couples are unable to successfully negotiate the emotional difficulties of their relationship, it can lead either to years of unhappiness or to the breakdown of the relationship (Richardson, 2010, p. 5). For the participants in my study, conflict could be described on a scale of minor to moderate irritations in the daily living systems that the couples were trying to develop. Kaufmann (2009) believes that the best way to capture the "subtle yet clear dynamics of irritation is to focus on the ordinary details of conjugal life" (p. 5). Although the participants in my studied were not married, the spirit of the word "conjugal" still applies in these cases as it is a word that indicates a joining of lives. Food work is one of the most ordinary

and repetitive aspects of daily life. By looking at the ways in which couples seek to harmonize their relationship through the organization of their food lives, we may begin to understand the influence of a conflicted household on the ways in which members of a household view food and eating.

Kaufmann (2009) brings attention to the idea that irritation in relationships is often provoked by the same root cause, and that irritation can be expressed as "irritation and irritation," where the tone or volume of an utterance of a phrase like 'that gets on my nerves' changes to "THAT GETS ON MY NERVES!" (p. 4). The type of irritation that leads to conflict discussed by Kaufmann and described in this study is not one that escalates into violence, and is rather one that results in a range of negative feelings. Since the "domestic universe" (Kaufmann, 2009, p. 11) in which couples exist varies greatly from one couple to another, the kinds of irritations that can evolve into conflicts also very greatly.

Tara and Chad best illustrated the art of avoiding household tasks to avoid conflict. I visited Tara and Chad four times over a two week period to collect data, and in that time, neither of them took out the trash or the recycling, both of which were overflowing. Since Tara and Chad had never discussed who is responsible for what household activities, the tasks were only performed when someone became frustrated with the level at which the task had not been completed.

During the coupled interview, Tara and Chad both insisted that they each were the person who was primarily responsible for washing the dishes and both accused each other of never washing the dishes. Through their fight about who does dishes more it became clear that the task of doing dishes had not been officially assigned to either person. It is important to note that while Tara and Chad were discussing their dishwashing routine, both were eager to end the

conversation, but Tara would say something that Chad had to refute, and then Chad would say something that Tara did not believe to be true so she would counter with a reason as to why she acted a certain way. They spoke over each other the entire time they were discussing dishwashing habits and it was clear that they did not agree with each other on this particular behavior.

> *Tara*: Well, that's why I tend to like try to wash it right up so it doesn't stick. But then when I feel like I've done that like for enough for amount of periods that I feel like it's his turn. [Cause then, then he says---,]
>
> *Chad*: [That's why you feel like] you're always washing up as well. Because you do just go over and wash your stuff up straight away so you always feel like you're washing it because that's what you're used to doing, as you go rather than just waiting and doing it all in one batch.

When asked how Tara and Chad decided who would be responsible for what tasks, Tara said "No, just whoever felt like it does it" to which Chad acknowledged with a "yeah." Tara and Chad show a clear example of avoidance of either or both the work or the argument that may erupt by talking about the work. When prompted to clarify who was in charge of dishwashing, they began to argue. It was clear that they had been avoiding communicating about household tasks and avoiding most attempts at assigning a task to one another. In Tara's case, while she was defending her dishwashing habits, she was pursuing her own habits and did not consult with Chad about how he would do it, instead taking care of the mess that she felt she caused.

Kaufmann (2009) explains further by articulating the thought process that may occur in a person when responding to an irritation such as one that Tara and Chad had experienced. Some people operate under a reflex of doing; in other words, when a person sees a task that needs completing, the person completes the task. Others may see a task that needs completing, and because he or she believes it should be someone else who completes the task, an emotional response begins to form in place of the reflex of doing. Kaufmann (2009) gives an example of

seeing a pile of laundry that needs ironing and responding by completing the ironing. For couples like Tara and Chad who have not articulated whose job it is to do the ironing, the irritation builds with each pile of ironing that a person sees in the home. Tara sees a pile of dishes and instead of doing the pile of dishes, she now thinks about whether it is her turn to do the dishes and why Chad has not yet done the dishes. She does not have a strong reflex of doing; that reflex only engages when her irritation reaches a tipping point, and the reflex is accompanied by irritation.

To me, this is indicative of behaviors that one would exhibit living with roommates or at a parent's house. Tara states, during the exchange, "Well, that's also a habit from home, though. We put things in the sink but we had a much bigger sink." Tara was using her past experiences living at home as a reference point as to how to act in her current circumstances. In some ways, it seemed like Tara was expecting Chad to fill the role that her previous female roommates and her mother have played in her life; she continues with the same behaviors as the past, but she has no frame of reference from which to draw in her current context of living with a boyfriend, not a mother or a roommate. In some regards, Tara was treating Chad like a roommate, not a partner.

One way that the participant couples deal with completing food-related tasks is to trade. There are several ways that these couples engage in trading or negotiation activities. One example is the trade of one activity for another, like trading doing the laundry for doing the dishes. Another example is completing only part of one specific task and having the other person do another part. To carry through with the previous example, Tara tends to put dishes away because Chad dislikes having to put items away:

> *Tara*: I tend to put [them away].
>
> *Chad*: Yeah, I hate doing that. I do. I've always hated sort of putting stuff away after its dried and stuff.

Tara and Chad admit to trading some tasks, but it is not clear that Tara's putting away of the dishes was traded for something in return from Chad. Since they both claimed to wash the dishes, it may be that Tara thought she washed the dishes and put them away, while Chad was under the impression that he washed them in exchange for her putting them away. Tara admits that they did not have a set system for managing housework in general, or specifically for food-related tasks:

> We don't have set, like, 'You do this, then,' Our dish washing, I think that we do it like, a couple of times and I have the habit of, sometimes when I eat, I would just wash it up and put it away, so when it does build up a little bit, there isn't much to do. But then it felt like I have actually been doing the washing, like, a lot. And then when I feel like I have done it a lot then tell Chad, like, the washing's yours, and then he would get kind of annoyed for like, 'I just did them' or something and I'm like, 'No, I did them for like the last two nights.[laughs] So it's your turn'. So it's kind of...yeah. It's kind of on my memory. --*Tara*

Tara and Chad do have a system in place, although it was hard for them to articulate what precisely that system looked like as insiders. In my observations, I felt that Tara and Chad had very divergent living styles, and to avoid arguments, they avoided discussing expectations for performing household tasks. For the time being, they were somewhat content with keeping the peace by going about their own way of doing things and only addressing issues when they became frustrated with a task or their perceptions of the other person not performing a task as they think it should be performed.

Avoiding conflict.

For these couples, negotiating responsibilities may be a means avoiding potential conflict. Discussing, avoiding, and trading tasks were observed as the ways in which these couples tried to minimize conflict regarding household duties. The best way to avoid conflict was to specialize in one or more household tasks, often separated by rooms of the house. The specialization of tasks usually occurred with "as needed" kinds of housework. For example, each

person might be put in charge of cleaning his or her own bathroom or take out the trash when it became full or smelly. Fred and Lissa each had their own bathrooms, and they were each responsible for cleaning up their own bathrooms upon moving in together. However, after the first couple of weeks, Lissa noticed that Fred had not been cleaning his bathroom as thoroughly as she was cleaning hers. Upon discussing the cleanliness of the bathrooms, Fred shared that he did not really care about the cleanliness of the bathroom and was only cleaning it to try to satisfy Lissa. This is one example of an instance of not wanting to do a task that ended up being important to the other person. To ensure that the bathroom was cleaned to Lissa's standards, or in her thoughts that it get done "properly," she took on that duty. An accurate way to describe this method of dividing labor is to use the common saying "if you want something done right, do it yourself."

DeVault (1994) states that "standards and plans for housework are typically unarticulated" (p. 140) making it difficult for couples to effectively share the workload and meet each other's expectations, should there be any. If one person takes over the responsibility of organizing the household, it can be difficult to translate that plan into actionable items for a household to follow. It was quite extraordinary that three participant couples were aware that there needed to be a plan, and were able to communicate that plan to each other. These couples have been able, in most circumstances, to communicate the work of provisioning and monitoring, often anticipating what the other is thinking. Fred commented that he is often excited when Lissa comes home from the supermarket because he wants to see what kind of sales she was able to take advantage of, and he always helps Lissa unpack the groceries so they are both aware of what they have in the pantry and freezer. Equal sharing of family work is quite rare (Hochschild & Machung, 2003), is often highly gendered, and requires coordination of daily

rituals that each partner learned in his or her family of origin or the previous places and spaces they each lived.

Couples realized that agreeing to a task that needed to be performed to the high standards of the other partner was destined to cause conflict in the relationship. Through specializing in certain household tasks, the other person who is not specializing in that task absolve him or herself of all responsibilities associated with that task as long as they are satisfied with the quality of the work being performed by the other person. Important household decisions made between a husband and wife may appear to be jointly made but in reality the decisions are stopgap strategies made to delay conflict (DeVault, 1994) and I believe those same tactics are being applied in my newly cohabiting couples. The arguments seen in new couples may arise again upon cohabiting and they serve to redefine new coupled rituals (Imber-Black & Roberts, 1998, p. 144). Relying on past experiences to navigate the newness of living together allows couples to discover the new roles and responsibilities in the newly formed household.

The participants in my study seemed to have considerable flexibility in planning household routines, and the couples choose routines based on the preferences of their partners. When one partner voices displeasure over the thought of cleaning the bathrooms, the other partner speaks up, claims that duty, and often never speaks of it again. Approaching the division of labor this way displays a “take one for the team” modality that is specifically adopted to please a partner. These sentiments were true of DeVault’s (1994, pp. 156-157) married couples with children and my cohabiting unmarried child-free partners. People like to please the people they love, regardless of context.

I can also view the behavior of the participant couples through DeVault’s (1994) evaluation of the patterns of household work based on class. DeVault (1994) states that middle-

class families often divide work into specializations, with each member of the family being in charge of a particular task. In working class or low-income minority families, there is not enough time to permit specialization and family members are expected to work together in maintaining the home space, regardless of gender (DeVault, 1994). The couples' incomes varied greatly, from poor graduate students to dual income professionals in the medical and engineering sciences, so there were opportunities to evaluate the influence of income on domestic roles. All of my participants came from at least middle class households, and they all held at least a bachelor's degree.

Discussion

The themes highlighted in this chapter are central to the experiences of my four participant couples and provide significant answers to the major research question concerning how couples make sense of the new responsibilities they have taken on by combining households with a romantic partner. The division of domestic labor was viewed through the lens of food. The use of food-related examples to describe the division of food-related tasks allows us to see the ways in which the couples deal with a circumstance that must be dealt with several times a day. The major contribution of this research is to show that couples begin thinking about food and foodwork on their first dates, and have to deal with foodwork exclusively upon moving in together. Interventions or studies that focus on couples and families and their foodwork should consider looking at couples and families over time, starting at first cohabitation, to gain better insights into how couples negotiate foodwork and other tasks that could be associated with health.

The households I studied were really reminiscent of ecosystems; the built environment was somewhat malleable in terms of how the couples divided and arranged their spaces, and

could be changed as the needs of the couple changed. The participants all desired to achieve a balance; a balance that is controlled by external and internal factors. The definitive factor that encourages couples to negotiate household tasks, in this case specifically related to food, is the act of moving in together. The couples are creating a new ecosystem upon moving in together, and as a part of existing in this community, these couples are forced to take a closer look at the daily minutia of their partner. When faced with this examination, there are multiple ways to react to dealing with someone else's ecosystem that can result in harmony or imbalance.

Foodwork would not be included in the "complete as needed" category of household tasks simply because of the number of times one has to think about food in a given day. For the most part, there is no other household task that requires as much preparatory time (meal planning, shopping, cooking, and cleaning) as foodwork, so comparing cooking to making the bed or scrubbing a toilet would be unfair. DeVault (1994, pp. 138-139) characterizes foodwork as women's work that is typically organized by housewives, and they are the ones who keep the entire feeding plan in their minds. In the couples that DeVault studied, even when men or husbands helped with the cooking, they reported that they were simply taking instruction from their wives. DeVault also points out the subtle differences between cooking (preparing what is available) and feeding (planning work).

The couples highlighted in this study would certainly acknowledge that foodwork is difficult work. In two of the four couples, the women (specifically Lissa and Erica) were responsible for cooking and shopping, and they were not entirely pleased about having to take on these tasks mostly by themselves. There was a discussion about taking up the majority of cooking and shopping, and the women accepted because of logical arguments of their jobs being less demanding and that they had more time in the evenings than their male partners. These

women have become “resentful cooks” (Bove & Sobal, 2006). The primary cooks did not reveal that the lived in households where this role was assigned to them by their male partners; rather, the tasks were discussed and it was determined that these two women had less demanding jobs that required less of their time, and therefore were the logical choices to be both cooks and shoppers. There are issues of gendered expectations at work here, especially surrounding the taken-for-granted beliefs that may be at play regarding the “resentful” female cooks, but I was not able to speak with my participants about these issues specifically. The person who is assigned or accepts the role of dinner cook ideally has more free time and greater skill than their partner.

Foodwork can be quite gendered, and I think many times people are not even aware that they are falling into foodwork based on gender roles (as noted above). I certainly noted that of the couples who had grills and used them often, the men were in charge of cooking whatever was on the grill, be it homemade pizza or burgers. I did not neglect to engage in a longer discourse about the gendered nature of foodwork in this manuscript; rather, I do not feel that my interview questions were really phrased in a way that would properly address such a complex issue. Because, in some instances, the men in my couples were (perceived to be) equally if not better skilled at cooking than their female partners, and in the past had done a majority of the food-related domestic work, it was difficult to identify instances of inequalities of service or deference without spending more time with the couples (DeVault, 1999, p. 148). I can say that, in this small sample, the men in my study did not participate in “feeding” work (1999, p. 144) as DeVault describes it; it was much more likely that the women would participate in the feeding work, especially from the organizational perspective.

There were no obvious divisions of labor that were purely motivated by gender. In fact, the participant couples complicate DeVault's central argument that women or wives participate in "caring work" for their families because they find it to be "valuable and important work." Molly and Jack are the closest to being an example of the subtle ways in which gender role expectations can alter the ways in which women and men perform foodwork. Molly makes twice the money that Jack makes, they live in her apartment, almost all of the items furnishing the apartment belong to Molly, but she is the one who was asked to cook more dinners at home rather than ordering takeout. Molly rationalizes the inequity of being the only person in charge of purchasing or preparing food by thinking of Jack's daily commute, so in order to be respectful of the extra time he puts in driving to and from work, Molly uses that time to prepare dinner for him, to honor his request, even if she felt like she might not make a good meal and honestly does not want to spend her time in the kitchen cooking.

If both partners feel that they do not have enough time to cook, neither cooks, and they each rely on themselves to prepare dinner. These couples are adults who are capable of feeding themselves, but there is a newfound social element involved in the feeding of a romantic partner. Partners communicated that the want to satisfy each other as much as possible and satisfying a partner through good food delivered in an efficient and effortless manner is a part of that satisfaction. If each partner is perceived to have the same amount of time available to prepare dinner, it seemed to result in collaboration where both partners take over certain parts of the dinner time meal and prepare them accordingly and combine the separate dishes into one meal to be shared. In the case of Molly and Jack, cooking new, complex dishes together was a weekend task, when there was time. Kaufmann (2010, p. 171) says, "Cooking for love is for the weekends, and quick and easy meals are for weekdays," which, to me, expresses the nature of the task of

cooking for some couples. Cooking and other foodwork can be seen as a chore in some contexts, like Molly's views on cooking dinner on weeknights. But in others, like Molly and Jack cooking together on the weekends, is an act of love, spending time together, and enjoying the food they make together. Not everyone sees cooking and foodwork as a chore and it is that perspective that allows for more flexibility in designating foodwork duties.

More available time is a factor that is considered a priority over skill, even though someone with less skill might take more time to cook dinner, thereby taking up more time of the person with less skill than if the person with more perceived skill would have cooked the meal. As these relationships continue over time, I believe that these couples will continue negotiating food-related and other household work as other major events occur in their lives, like graduating from graduate school, marriage, children, or moving for a new job. Each change in the life course presents a new set of variables that the couple will need to consider in their new environments. If the couples have developed the skills with their partners during their first experience living together, the application of those skills in new settings makes those transitions easier and less likely to result in conflict.

The couples that were successful in the negotiation of household duties, especially those that occur at the frequency of food-related duties, will have an adequate skill set to rely upon to navigate through the future events in the life course.

Most studies that try to answer questions about the ways in which people engage in negotiations about household duties do so with newly married couples or heterosexual families with children as participants. The findings of this study reveal that looking at couples after marriage or as far forwards as having children might be too late to capture the earliest experiences of adapting to each other. Of course, not all couples live together before marriage, so

using marriage as a point in the life course to study this phenomenon would be appropriate if the couples had never cohabited prior to marriage. However, couples that cohabitate outside of marriage are already negotiating household work and collecting data and the time of cohabitation is the key point at which these roles are beginning to be defined.

Bove & Sobal (2006) examined the foodwork negotiations of twenty newly married couples using qualitative, in-depth interviews at the time the couples were married and again one year later. They were able to capture, over time, their participants thoughts, feelings and actions relating to food and eating, including foodwork, upon marriage and one year after marriage. For their study, the act of marriage was event that all participants had to share to be involved with the study. In my study, the act of moving in together was my unifying factor. For some of Bove & Sobal's (2006) couples, getting married was the reason why they were moving in together, but some of their participant couples had already been living together for an unspecified period of time (p. 74).

Bove & Sobal's (2006) participants were couples who were about to be married or were newly married. After the first few interviews, they realized that their participants believed that their built environment had an effect on the ways in which they formed domestic roles, and that those roles might change upon moving into a new house. The participants also accounted for a shift in domestic roles, specifically relating to food work, with changing work or academic schedules. Of course these changes can be precipitated by marriage, and I acknowledge the unanticipated salience that Bove & Sobal's (2006) participants experienced in knowing that a change in the life course, like marriage, could have a profound effect on the couples' domestic activities. I do not agree that moving from one shared living space to another shared living space would significantly alter the ways in which these couples negotiate the division of domestic

work, especially food-related domestic work. A new house might be closer to work for one partner in a couple, which may mean that that person might now be responsible for preparing dinner because of a shift in perceived available time.

Typically, marriage is accompanied by the giving of gifts. Bove and Sobal (2006) did not mention the fact that these couples were most likely given many household, and specifically kitchen-related, gadgets and appliances as gifts and what role those artifacts may have played in the renegotiation of household tasks. However, Bove & Sobal (2006) believed that the relocation to a new domicile meant the space would have "enhanced foodspace characteristics" and that "because better kitchens offer new foodwork options," (p. 85) but they did not specify whether or not those characteristics were purely architectural, or if those new foodwork options were actually used.

Two of the women in my study could be described as "resentful cooks" (Bove & Sobal, 2006, p. 89); people who are asked to cook or have been assigned the duties of cook by their partner when they really do not want to be the person responsible for that aspect of household work. Both women had access to kitchens in their shared home environment that they personally described as being an improvement over previous kitchen spaces to which they have had access in the past. However, they both still resented the fact that they had been placed into the primary cook role. In some instances, an improved kitchen space with access to a variety of gadgets and cooking tools may facilitate cooking behaviors. If the desire to be the primary cook is not present, and the role of primary cook is not a task a person nominates themselves for, the facilities do not matter.

The majority of Bove & Sobal's (2006) couples moved to larger homes or remodeled their houses at about the time they wed, and the improved food spaces influenced some couples'

foodwork negotiations, encouraging timid female cooks in particular to cook more often. There was little explanation as to why "timid" female cooks were more likely to engage in cooking after a kitchen remodel or what exactly the barriers were prior to the remodel that empowered cooking behaviors afterward. Bove & Sobal (2006) also did not address how male cooks were influenced by the kitchen remodel.

I did ask the participant couples if having their dream kitchen would affect how they approached food and cooking in the household, but they reported that they might enjoy cooking more when they had time to cook. It is my impression that there are underlying reasons beyond a well-designed and fully equipped kitchen that cause people to cook or not to cook in their homes. The perceptions of who has more time and more cooking skill, when combined with the kitchen space and tools, and the ways in which individuals in a couple feel about the tasks they want to do, are expected to do, and eventually perform, are more pressing factors in determining who actually cooks and why.

Conclusion

In conclusion, foodwork was negotiated based on the consideration of past experiences with foodwork in various other living situations, compared to the present relationship and the partner's attitudes towards food and other domestic work. The physical kitchen space and available tools only added reason for individuals or couples to engage or not engage in food-related work; most often, a less than ideal kitchen space served as an excuse for not wanting to cook in the first place.

The process of dividing food-related domestic work was negotiated by couples early in their relationships upon moving in together, but the couples began observing domestic behaviors while they were dating before cohabiting. These observations, in some cases, lead to

expectations of the performance of domestic work that did not happen upon cohabiting. Perceptions of available time and developing skill changed or evolved in most couples and solo foodwork was not desired by any of the participant couples. Each couple preferred to either have someone else do the majority of the foodwork, or to work together, equally, in preparing meals. Three of my couples went through a process of negotiating the role of primary household food worker while one couple avoided the negotiation by taking responsibility for their own food preparation.

Negotiations regarding foodwork will occur again when factors in the relationship change, such as a change in housing, employment, or schedules. The ways in which these couples negotiate, however, are unique to each couple, but they all developed a particular negotiation strategy unique to their circumstances to avoid conflict and make foodwork more manageable.

CHAPTER 5: NUTRITIONAL GATEKEEPING IN NEWLY COHABITING COUPLES

Introduction

The term "nutritional gatekeeper" refers to the person in a household who typically makes the purchasing and preparation decisions related to food (Wansink, 2003). Food reaches the household through multiple channels, like the grocery store, the garden, and the refrigerator. The selection of the channels and the food that passes through them is under control of the gatekeeper.

According to Wansink (2003, 2006), 92 percent of the time there is still one person young or old, male or female, who purchases and serves the majority of food in families with children. In three different surveys, Wansink (2003, 2006) asked a total of more than 1,700 parents about how much influence they had over their children's eating. He found that parents believed there was a gatekeeper (a parent, grandparent, school personnel, other caregivers) that controlled, on average, 72 percent of the food their children ate. Traditionally, the role of the nutritional gatekeeper goes to the mother because women are more likely to stay at home and provide for the daily needs of husband and children. With Lewin's (1951) initial coining of the term "gatekeeper" (Lewin, 1951) the woman of the household was both shopper and cook, and he concluded that efforts to change food consumption patterns should target the "homemaker" as the primary household gatekeeper. In the 1940s, a homemaker was assumed to be the woman of the house. However, as the definition of family changes and more women are in the workplace than ever before, the role of nutritional gatekeeper is no longer gender-bound.

At the time, housewives believed that husbands and children strongly influenced the foods served in the home through their approval or disapproval of what was served. The feedback determined what was purchased and prepared for the next meal. When asked, the husbands and children stated that they would eat anything that the wife or mother served, and the

husbands and children believed that what they ate was solely determined by the wife or mother. The husbands and children were unaware that their input was being considered by the wife or mother (Wansink, 2006).

The image of a nutritional gatekeeper is one of a person acting as a physical barrier to prevent, or enable, food items coming into the home. However, the role of nutritional gatekeeper may be better described as an activity rather than a person, using the term nutritional gatekeeping. For example, a vegan mother would certainly provide a physical barrier against bringing animal products into the home by not shopping for them, but she may also educate her partner and children about the vegan lifestyle and have a formidable psychosocial hold as well (Wansink, 2003). Recipes and traditions are often passed down through cooking and baking. Even what seem like smaller details, like less or more health preparations or portion sizes, are also communicated by the nutritional gatekeeper.

The current research on nutritional gatekeeping centers greatly on heteronormative couples with children and are evaluative in perspective (Wansink, 2003, 2006). The studies seek to identify the nutritional gatekeeper and (most typically) her influence on the family's health through food procurement and preparation, and their eventual consumption of those foods. The current approach to helping families eat healthier is to examine the ways in which a gatekeeper is operating and offer suggestions on ways to alter current behavior into healthier behaviors. Little is known about couples outside the context of family, and even less about non-traditional couples and the ways in which they identify with and through food. One might suspect that married and unmarried cohabiting couples differ stylistically when creating a joint food system, but Bove et al. (2003) found that it was the actual sharing of shopping, cooking, and eating that

mattered, not marital status; most food-related operations functioned in the same way prior to marriage as when they were cohabiting within marriage.

Bove et al. (2003) interviewed couples right after they were married and again a year later, citing the time at which marriage occurred as a "crucial time to examine joint spousal food choices" (p. 27). However, the majority of the couples in their study had lived together before marriage from 6 months to 6 years. Although the authors were focusing primarily on food choice in their study, they asked questions about shopping, cooking and eating, and still came to the conclusion that it was the sharing of foodwork that mattered, and being legally married had no measurable influence on these couples and their behaviors. The major finding in their study was that the person put in charge of meal planning, food purchasing, meal preparation and meal clean-up was the major decision maker in the couple regarding food choices and influencing dietary convergence. They also noted that couples had implemented a variety of systems for handling foodwork; typically the wife held the majority of the foodwork power, but their study found that couples were about evenly divided between those with a sole partner as primary dinner decision-maker and cook and those in which both partners shared in making dinner decisions and meals.

With these studies in mind, the findings of my study started to take shape. First, I explored the ways in which couples strive for dietary convergence. Second, I examined how the role of nutritional gatekeeper might be determined, or shared, in family contexts that do not include children. Through in-depth interviews and home tours, I explored the ways in which routines around food work are established upon cohabiting and argue that these routines are started before marriage and children are a part of these couples' lives. It is in that examination that the role of gatekeeper is found to not be held exclusively by one person; rather, the

gatekeeper is situational and conditional based on a variety of factors, including time, schedules, and disposition towards foodwork. The following sections discuss the major themes found regarding nutritional gatekeeping behaviors.

Learning the Rules to Change the Rules

Dietary convergence, the movement into eating similar if not completely identical diets, was nearly universal among Bove et al.'s (2003) couples. When cohabitation began, partners entered a period of experimentation during which they sought to identify mutually satisfying foods, recipes, and meals. Dietary convergence can be both an explicit and unspoken goal in the relationship, but often couples are operating under behavioral patterns that are not obvious to them. In order to achieve dietary convergence a person must first learn the rules in order to change them.

For Erica, living alone carried a different set of culinary rules than changed upon moving in with Nathan. When living with a roommate that was her ex-boyfriend, her attitude toward food was one of convenience over framing the meal as a social experience with a loved one. Even though Erica was living with another person, there was strain and emotional distance between them; she described her eating behaviors as if she were eating alone. Eating became more about utility than a social experience to be shared.

> Well, before Nathan and I moved in, I was eating a lot of frozen food just cause, again, like, food wasn't a big deal to me. So I was like, I need to eat, like I'll just pop this burrito into the microwave. --*Erica*

Nathan discussed how, when living alone, he would often eat whatever he had around the house, and would cycle between healthy eating and eating processed junk foods. Living alone eliminated any social obligations Nathan had regarding eating, and he was free to eat at his desk

and keep on working through the night. Now, Nathan makes time to sit with Erica, eat a meal together, and talk.

> Even when I lived by myself, I would go through cycles, where I'd eat really well, and then I'd eat like, you know, I'd have moment of weakness where I eat some crap for a while. Processed food is probably the only thing that like, like I do occasionally eat these days that I never would have eaten in the past. There's also this social obligation to eat now where in the past there wasn't. Before, I would eat when I was hungry, but with Erica, there are mealtimes. --*Nathan*

Molly shared that living alone often times meant eating alone, an experience she does not like. Instead of making a meal only to be haunted by the leftovers in the refrigerator, Molly ordered carry out from her favorite local restaurants. She didn't want to sit in a restaurant and eat alone, but she appreciated the social experience of ordering food on the phone, driving to the restaurant, the social exchange picking up the food, and driving home to eat in front of the TV or while doing work.

> Sometimes it's hard eating alone because you have just so many leftovers you're going to have to eat it for the next week. You know? Um, or it's like, not as much fun to cook like a really nice and like pretty meal, and then like sit by yourself and eat it, there's no one to appreciate it? So like, I like to cook, and sometimes I would just do it for myself? But I prefer like, cooking for someone else. Mm… I get carryout a lot." --*Molly*

Tara recalls living with roommates and getting a portion of a casserole that a roommate would cook. Her mother also cooked meals in large batches and stores them in the freezer, and frequently delivered these meals to Tara at the apartment she shared with Chad. Tara's experiences were with cooking food in bulk for a bunch of roommates or her mother cooking for their entire family. For Tara, living with Chad was the closest she has come to living alone.

> I helped my mom cook. When I was with roommates...my first batch of roommates, once in a while they would cook a bigger batch and I would get some of the share, and then my second one it would be just...I just did a lot of eating out, once in a while I'd do fried rice and, like, I have a couple of things that I would do. And my mom makes a lot of stuff, so we have a lot of her stuff frozen so...there's that. --*Tara*

Chad mentioned that he really valued variety in his diet, and did not enjoy eating leftovers or the same items for multiple days in a row. Tara confirmed that Chad was not a big fan of leftovers, and gave me an example of a time when she used her knowledge of past experiences cooking for roommates and following her mother's bulk cooking example, and how it had not really worked out for her and Chad:

> Yeah I guess...yeah I do kind of have that as my thing. I like to get more variety, over the past week. I don't like eating the same thing over many days. --*Chad*

> I know that Chad doesn't like the leftovers, so I try not to do, like a giant pot of things, cause of...in the past, I've done the chicken soup to get over being sick and stuff. I think my mom gave us Chinese herbal stock, and chicken soup and onion. And we would have like the first day and then all the time after that, it was just me eating it or pushing him to eat it. --*Tara*

In summary, couples used past experiences of living alone, with platonic roommates or with family to help contextualize expectations for living with a romantic partner. Frequently, those past experiences are not just referenced but acted on while living together, as was evident with Tara making a large pot of soup for her and Chad to eat when they were sick, not knowing that Chad prefers to have variety in his diet and was not excited about eating soup for several meals in a row.

The participant couples also noticed differences in what was eaten, when it was eaten, and feelings they had while eating alone compared to eating with their partner; eating is more of a social experience when you live with someone else with which you are romantically involved. I observed behaviors and my participants explained behaviors to me that align with attempts at dietary convergence. For example, three of the four women in the study did not like onions, so their partners had given up eating onions in shared dishes. Additionally, Lissa tried to find a way to enjoy venison that Fred and his family had hunted and processed, so they could enjoy the

same meal together. Some dietary convergence was achieved in all of the couples, and any unresolved food choice negotiations could result in future food-related conflict.

Meal Planning

The men in these relationships did not exhibit what DeVault (1994) would call the organizational work involved with feeding the family (p. 140), or "feeding work." It was much more likely that the women would participate in the feeding work, which includes meal planning, shopping, cooking, and cleaning. In the case of Fred and Lissa, the feeding work was managed by both partners to the point where the foodwork related duties in the house could easily be shuffled to the other person without a loss in productivity or food satisfaction.

There are many ways in which meal planning is conceptualized outside of the mind of the person whose job it is to plan. DeVault (1994) compares the primary partner in charge of meal planning as a manager or foreman who is responsible for arranging, planning, and overseeing all the steps involved in getting food from a store to the table (DeVault, 1994, p. 140). Because there are so many steps involved in food work, it is often difficult for a person to communicate all the things that need to be done. DeVault's (1994) participants articulated that it is often easier to work through what needs to be done based on the person's established routine rather than explaining what needs to be done, and how it should be done, to others.

A primary planner can communicate one of the steps that is common in meal planning is the establishment of a communal list. A shopping list placed on the refrigerator was introduced primarily for the organization of the person put in charge of grocery shopping (see pages 92-96 for more information). Three of my four couples contributed to some kind of list that detailed what items would be needed when someone went to the grocery store. However, only the women introduced the concept of a community list to the households, and used these lists when they

went shopping. For example, if Fred stopped at the grocery store, he “just knew” what they needed and picked it up. Lissa, however, would need to have the list to reference to remember what all was needed in the home. There seemed to be some kind of preoccupation with not wanting to forget something while at the store and needing the list, whereas the men were more likely to just shop and “get what looked good” (Nathan). When Nathan comes along with Lissa on shopping trips, he often has no concept of what is on Lissa’s list and shops according to his own needs, wants, and rules.

> *Erica:* We will just get things to have around. Um, but then sometimes we get things and then I'm like what are we going to do with those.
> *Natalie:* Like what?
> *Erica:* I don't know. Like squash, I don't' know what we are going to do with all that squash.

Because Nathan is not the primary cook, his encroachment into Erica’s shopping territory complicated her abilities to organize both the shopping and the cooking tasks. The thought of preparing items like squash causes Erica anxiety because it does not fit into Erica’s plans for foodwork for the week. When I first visited Erica and Nathan, Erica commented on a bunch of Swiss chard that had been in the refrigerator for over two weeks and begun to rot. I asked her to tell me more about the decision to purchase the bunch of Swiss chard, and she stated that Nathan had decided that he wanted to go grocery shopping with her and he put the chard in the cart, insisting that he was going to cook it up for them for dinner one evening. He never did, leaving Erica to wonder what she was supposed to do with what was to her a very foreign ingredient. When Nathan decides he wants to participate in foodwork, it frustrates Erica because she would rather not do any of the foodwork and only does it because Nathan has been very busy with school since they moved in together. Erica describes Nathan’s involvement her organization of the foodwork:

> He's also like well I don't like consider the best grocery shopper. He kind of like buys on a whim and doesn't like plan as well. And like will just pay for whatever he needs without like looking at what's on sale. And I'm more of a sale shopper. Like, we're just going to eat this because it's on sale this week. And then sometimes I'll plan out full meals, but a lot of times it's what's on sale at Kroger this week. ---*Erica*

Erica has clearly taken on a majority of the "feeding work" (DeVault, 1994, p. 144) because she is able to communicate the ways in which she has organized all of the foodwork related tasks, and Nathan demonstrates that he is not a part of her system when he behaves in ways that counter her organization.

Additionally, the lists initiated by the women seemed to take on the role of keeping track of their new roommate's behaviors in their shared space. In Molly's own words:

> There's a list on the fridge and like I kind of established that. 'Cause, like, we do that in my family. I was like if you need anything just put it on the list. I'll get it. If you use up anything that we keep around a lot, like peanut butter, please put it on the list because I don't want to go looking for peanut butter and realize we don't have any. --*Molly*

When Molly lived alone, she still kept a list because that was something that her family did and has become an established routine in Molly's life that she finds comforting. Now that Jack is living with her, the list has taken on its original purpose: to keep track of what is being consumed in the house by other people. Organizationally speaking, Molly was perfectly aware of how much peanut butter was in her house before Jack moved in because she was the only person eating the peanut butter. Now there is a concern that she will not have access to something that she wants because Jack consumed it.

In summary, the men in these relationships did not fully adopt the feeding work (DeVault, 1994) responsibilities of the household. It was far more likely that women would assume the role and the organizational work involved. Whether the task at hand was meal planning, shopping, cooking, or cleaning, women adopted these roles and delegated tasks within the parameters set

up in their coupled relationships. Except in the case of Fred and Lissa, the feeding work was managed by both partners to the point where the foodwork related duties in the house could easily be shuffled to the other person without a loss in productivity or food satisfaction.

Procurement/Shopping

Procuring food can mean anything from growing it yourself to shopping for pre-made items at a store. For the most part, my participants were shoppers. Fred has an extensive garden that he tends throughout the summer months and grows zucchini, squash, lettuces, cucumbers, and other plant life for his and Lissa's consumption. Fred also goes home to South Dakota and hunts deer with his family, providing a source of protein for the household, too. Nathan does potted herbs on the porch, and has gardened in the past, but the current house does not have enough land to have a garden. Beyond this, all of the participant couples get their food from the grocery store or restaurants.

The most significant finding related to the procurement of food or food shopping was that the person who does the shopping is not always the same person who does the cooking. Molly and Erica do a vast majority of the shopping and cooking, but Jack and Nathan still perform some duties related to shopping or cooking. Jack has a membership at a bulk shopping club that is on his way home from work, so Jack was put in charge of picking up very specific items from that store. Nathan does not go shopping on his home as of late, but he will sometimes go with Erica to the store and, from Erica's perspective, complicate her shopping routine by purchasing foods that she either does not like or does not know how to prepare.

Fred and Lissa both cook and shop. DeVault's (1994) theories on feeding work being primarily one person's responsibility are challenged with this couple. They are both aware of the amounts and kinds of foods that are in the home, what needs to be purchased, and the general

plan for meals for the week. Fred and Lissa figured out how to communicate with each other regarding feeding work and there are very successful efforts to collaborate and work together doing feeding work. They could describe no instances of miscommunications about foodwork in the seven months they had lived together

Erica and Nathan have very divergent shopping styles. Erica likes to go to one store, get supplies, and go home. She typically shops at a supermarket for conventionally prepared food items. Nathan will go to four different stores searching for the best produce and ingredients available, opting for local and organic products at food co-ops and specialty ethnic markets. They differ greatly when it comes to food philosophies, but Erica and Nathan have not really discussed these differences with thoughts of resolving them. Based on our conversations, Nathan and Erica are in the middle of negotiating procedures for food shopping. Nathan explained his food philosophy in comparison to Erica's:

> I want to know where my food came from. I go for the nutritional quality. Sometimes…I think she thinks I'm being snobby when I buy certain things 'cause I wanna know where they came from. But then when we buy the alternative she's like "Oh I can see the difference." Maybe she never bought the organic or local stuff and saw a difference. --*Nathan*

Through our other conversations, Nathan indicated that he tried to convince Erica that shopping at multiple stores is worth her while. Nathan felt that he does not have time to shop or cook right now, but he still wants to try to adhere to his food lifestyle before he moved in with Erica and is trying to convince her to shop like he would have shopped in the past. In some ways, it seemed like Nathan is trying to get Erica to abandon her food identity in favor of his because he felt like his identity was morally and nutritionally superior. His intentions seemed to be that he wants both of them to be happier and healthier, and he thought his approach to food achieves those goals. In essence, Nathan shifted his foodwork responsibilities to Erica and not-so-secretly wants her to do things his way.

Nathan's attempts to shift Erica's shopping style to one that is more aligned with his own could be viewed in both positive and negative ways. On the positive side, Nathan's diet is overall healthier, so his trying to get her to purchase foods from his diet could have a positive health impact on her. Alternatively, Erica's shopping behaviors have the potential to have a negative health impact on Nathan, since she has a tendency to purchase junk food, like chips and chocolate bars, which Nathan now eats because they are available to him at home. Where, in the past, he would not purchase those items so he would not be tempted to eat them. Regardless of diet, health, and intentions, Nathan is trying to change Erica's behavior for what he thinks is the better, but he is still engaged in changing how Erica's food-related behaviors.

When both partners are responsible for shopping, there are opportunities to learn about foods that the other partner might not have in his or her diet. Again, these opportunities could be viewed as both healthy and unhealthy, depending on the food in question. In the case of Lissa and Fred, Lissa loves avocados and mangoes and until they started living together, those were not items that Fred every really purchased and had in his home. He learned from Lissa how to select ripe mangoes and avocados, how to prepare those items for eating, and sampled them. They now eat three or four mangoes and avocados a week as a part of their weekly routine. Alternatively, Erica brings home a bag of potato chips, expecting them to last one or two weeks, and comes home to find that Nathan ate the entire bag while working at the computer the night before.

In summary, the person in charge of shopping is certainly a gatekeeper in many senses. If the shopper does not purchase an item, it cannot be eaten by the household unless that person goes out and gets it for him or herself. If partners have discordant approaches to food and eating, and one of them is put in charge of shopping, the other partner's relationship with food might

change for better or worse. If both are in charge of shopping and they are not well organized, conflict could certainly arise.

Cooking

Not all cooks are created equally. Perceived and actual cooking skills played a major role in deciding who was going to cook and what could be prepared based on perceived and actual skill sets. Fred doesn't see making food as a chore—it's fun, and he enjoys doing it. Lissa also enjoys cooking, but it's more of an effort for her because she felt she has to do more research to ensure what she makes will be tasty. She's very precise and follows directions, whereas Fred relies on, and trusts, his past experiences with cooking to guide him in making a tasty meal. However, Fred structures his life so he has time to cook in the evenings because it is something that he sees as a part of his day, not something that has to be reluctantly performed. Lissa is also perfectly capable and willing to cook in the evenings, but Fred really enjoys cooking. Lissa recently quit her job and is transitioning into a new position after they get married this summer, and she expressed that she thinks she should be cooking dinner in the evenings because she will have more time.

Erica is similar to Lissa in that she follows recipes precisely. Nathan is more familiar with ingredients, flavors, and a variety of dishes, and prefers to collect several recipes and take the best elements of each of those recipes and create something all his own. Fred also does this with recipes. Erica and Lissa are the less experienced cooks, and lack the same kind of confidence/comfort with ingredients when compared to Fred and Nathan, so they rely on recipes.

Molly sees food preparation as a chore, and does not want to do it, so since dinner is her responsibility, she orders take out when she doesn't want to cook. Jack does not think he has the time to cook and fit in his commute and his evening workout, so Molly is the only one left to

cook. Since she does not really like cooking, and is more satisfied with food from restaurants, she orders take out. Molly is perceived to be the person with more cooking experience and more time available, so she cooks.

Kaufmann (2011) observes that there is a distinct difference between cooking for pleasure and cooking for the everyday, but viewing cooking as a chore the same as any other is not entirely accurate. The sharing of a meal often brings people together around a table, or at least to a shared space. Other chores do not generate feelings of togetherness and sharing. Failing at cooking a satisfying meal has the potential affect the people you are serving in a very negative way, and because of this, there is increased pressure to perform at or above standard. Logic would dictate that people with more experience and confidence are more likely to take on the role of cooking than someone who is less experienced and less confident, but the participant couples viewed perceived skill as one determinant as to who would cook.

Molly and Jack cooked together on the weekends, and they would select a dish to work on together. Erica only cooks from cookbooks and recipes and does not feel comfortable cooking without a reference. She tries to select dishes that she thinks both she and Nathan will enjoy, leaving out ingredients that she does not like. She will often ask Nathan if a recipe she has selected looks good, and desires his approval before cooking.

Perceived and actual cooking skills played a major role in deciding who was going to cook and what could be prepared based on perceived and actual skill sets. Deciding what to cook was a more complex issue that builds on meal planning and shopping styles. Taking what was discussed about meal planning and shopping into consideration, an additional factor was food preference and familiarity with a dish. Steps were taken to include or exclude items that were not liked by both partners, and if a dish required an ingredient that either the cook or the other

partner did not care for, it was universally not included in the dish. Dishes were discussed in advance of shopping as a part of meal planning, and cooks seemed to feel more confident with what they were going to make if the other partner was aware of and agreed to the plan.

Influence of Kitchen Space and Tools on Cooking

Past experiences setting up a kitchen space did play a role in setting up the present kitchen space. The process by which couples set up and subsequently used the kitchen space varied greatly, but was most noticeably influenced by whether or not the couple got a new place together or if one person moved into the other person's space. The physical layout of the kitchen, the appliances it contains, the storage it provides, and the items placed by people into their kitchen spaces also influences the ways in which people function in their kitchens and the complexity of foods coming out of those kitchens.

There is certainly a relationship between domestic architecture and the use of space and many variables that influence that relationship (Kent, 1990, p.2). The built environment, in this case the kitchen space, can be "neutral, inhibiting, or facilitating to behavior, but not determining" (Rapoport, 1969, p. 9), and the participant couples discuss the ways in which their kitchen space inhibits or facilitates the use of the kitchen space to prepare food. However, other factors are involved in determining the ways in which food-related housework is divided, and the physical kitchen space and the tools contained within are primary determinants as to whether or not cooking in the current home environment is even possible, let alone pleasurable.

Kitchen space.

This study approached the kitchen as a space where unique work is performed. Certainly the kitchen space influences the kinds of food work that can be performed in it, and the space will influence the kinds of work that need to be divided amongst its occupants. I did not intend

on viewing the kitchen space in terms of its theoretical importance as a built environment that has utilitarian, social, and personal identities (Kent, 1990). My main goal was to understand how my participants felt about their kitchen spaces, and to what degree they use those spaces for cooking.

A complaint that all the participant couples shared with me was the lack of kitchen space or a kitchen design that interfered with the act of cooking or eating. Participants did compare their present living space to previous ones as a way of connecting what they have done in the past with what they are currently experiencing. However, the stories about the couples' current circumstances were more grounded in telling stories of what they had already done. These stories were used to contextualize the couples' present circumstances and compare it to what they felt the future held for them.

The participant couples knew that I was interested in the ways in which they interacted with food, so most of our conversations started and ended in the kitchen. Going into data collection, I felt that the kitchen would be one of the most heavily used spaces in the home, and certainly one that would contain many artifacts representing both people in the relationship. I did not consider the fact that the lack of use of the kitchen would also tell a story about the couples' lives. During the home tours, I asked each participant about their kitchen space: what they liked or disliked about it, where things were stored, who decided what went where, and what items were kept and discarded when the couple merged their lives together. Most importantly, I asked how the kitchen fit into their newly shared lives.

Through the interviews, the home tour, and photographs, I was able to identify several themes centered on the kitchen space: the lack of space in the kitchen/making use of the current space, the duplication of tools, and integrating two foodwork systems into what is now a shared

space. In the case of Fred and Lissa, their house was built in the early 1950s and has never been updated. A wood-burning stove still sits in the corner of the kitchen on its red brick hearth, and the kitchen does not have space for a dishwasher. Fred purchased a portable dishwashing unit that he rolls out of the utility room into the kitchen, hooks up to the sink, and runs. The architecture of the kitchen does not permit for a permanent dishwasher without major renovations, but dishes could still be done by hand at the sink. Lissa and Fred choose to use the dishwasher, even though it is initially inconvenient, because it ends up taking less time to load and hook up the dishwasher than it does to wash by hand.

The dishwasher takes up even more space in their tiny kitchen, but sometimes another work surface is helpful when both Fred and Lissa are preparing a meal together. There is just enough space to put a small table under the large window on the far side of the kitchen, but Fred confessed that they have never had a meal at that table. Lissa further specified that the table is decorative and just serves as another flat surface to supplement countertop space when it is not being used to store fruit. Fred says:

> We have a little issue where we both need cutting boards [while cooking] because there's sometimes not enough space. We have a dishwasher that plugs into the sink and sometimes we'll have that out because we've just done dishes or are going to do dishes and that works as an actual work space. Once we have that, we have enough workspace to both be using cutting boards and things. Sometimes that comes up. One of us throws elbows and we get space. We figure it out. We put something away to make space. --*Fred*

Chad and Tara's kitchen space is galley style with one side of the galley being a cement wall. There is no dishwasher, a single basin shallow stainless steel sink, and an apartment-sized stovetop and oven. The apartment-sized refrigerator is actually located in the dining room area directly adjacent to the galley kitchen. A wobbly card table has been set up to extend the counter space and holds the microwave and electric kettle, but the card table is about 12 inches shorter than the countertop. If the dish drying rack is placed on the countertop, no counter top space

remains. Directly behind the stovetop is the pantry, but it is impossible to open the pantry and stand at the stove at the same time. If both Tara and Chad were in the kitchen, one person would have to completely exit the working area for the other to pass through. The kitchen space is a constant source of frustration for Chad because his family's country home in England had six gas burners and ample space to move about. They both blame the kitchen for part of the reason why they do not feel a strong desire to cook. Chad says:

> I think at times yeah it definitely. Being able to say have two or three pots or pans in the drawer in that kitchen and being able to move them all over the place and having areas to prepare. I mean in terms of what we've got we put the table off to the side it's a bit more of surface work. A bit of chopping and such it's not stable enough so it's finding room on that very small bit of table of what we're able to do. Well any kind of prep work. See yeah it does, it really does but you make the best of it I guess and use the space that's available if need be I clear off the table. --*Chad*

I asked Tara how having her dream kitchen would change her approach to cooking. She replied:

> It might make me want to cook more [laughs]. Baking just seemed like a hassle 'cause the sink is really small. The drier on the side is really small. And the counters are really small…So, yeah, it's unusable. Just small. But I'm so busy I probably wouldn't even have time to use it. --*Tara*

Her response very clearly indicated that having a kitchen space that met all of her needs would encourage her to cook more, at least in theory. She also commented on how the pantry and kitchen are not stocked with staples required for baking or other basic savory recipes, saying, "And even if it was stocked I don't know if I would use it or not 'cause we're so busy," indicating that time was an additional factor in her decision not to participate in food work. Her comment about being too busy to cook, regardless of the kitchen, made me question if the kitchen space and being too busy were just excuses Tara was telling herself because she really had no desire to cook.

Chad and Tara had several disagreements during their coupled interview while talking about the division of labor in the home. In this example, Chad expressed that he got frustrated when Tara tried to get into the kitchen while he is cooking. He explained that the size of the kitchen does not permit more than one person to be in the space at a time and he had safety concerns. In the following quote, Tara justifies her behavior.

> *Tara*: Based on kitchen related tasks, uh, for me sometimes, um, I don't think there's been any big arguments. There are times when he's cooking and I would just happen to go there to---
>
> *Chad*: ---To get something to eat when I'm cooking and that bugs me. So, I kick her out of the kitchen.
>
> *T*: But then I noticed when I was cooking the other day, he walked in to look at stuff and, well, it doesn't bother me too much, I would always just--
>
> *C:* Cause I'm the one used to doing stuff in there so it kind of--
>
> *T*: No you're not. I do stuff in there too. I just don't care if anybody else is there. N: Is that because of any constraints in the kitchen in terms of size or functionality?
>
> *T*: I think that maybe also, I don't know how you worked when you were at home in England, but at home at my house even though yeah, the kitchen's much bigger, but I'm used to, like just squeezing in with where my mom is and my mom doesn't really care. But like, around there like three of us are using the sink at the same time like, you just kind of squeeze there.
>
> *C*: Yeah, we very much don't… don't do that.
>
> *T:* So, I'm kind of, I'm used to if somebody's there then I'll work around it. Like, he gets annoyed--
>
> *C*: And especially with a kitchen this size, it's just, you're just tripping over each other. And if I've got, I mean partially its concern because I don't want to turn around with like a knife in my hand or a hot pan or something like that.

In this exchange, it is clear that Chad is annoyed by Tara's behavior, but she refers to her mother and father's home and how that kind of behavior is acceptable there, and uses this past experience to justify her behavior while living with Chad. This is an example of operating under past experiences and extending those behaviors into present circumstances, much to Chad's

dislike. It seemed relatively clear that Tara and Chad have never seriously discussed the fact that Chad prefers only one person in the kitchen at a time, or if that discussion did occur, Tara did not take it seriously. She was dismissive of his concerns, even though Chad tried to communicate concern with the tone of his voice. It was almost as though Tara was not interested in listening to the reasons why Chad was frustrated, regardless of the legitimacy of the reasons. Tara did not want to engage in a conversation about the chore and was content to label Chad's emotions as "being annoyed."

The kitchen layout has an observable influence on the ways in which people interact with and prepare food. However, if a person enjoys cooking as a part of their household responsibilities, the quality of the kitchen can be augmented to better suit the needs of the cook. Even the most state-of-the-art kitchen may not inspire confidence in someone who either does not enjoy cooking or has reservations about his or her skills as a cook. A well planned and stocked kitchen space may only inspire those are already inspired and motivated to cook.

Kitchen tools.

The process of combining people's worth of kitchen items and combining two kitchen systems involved discussion and compromise on the part of each of the couples. In all cases but Tara and Chad, the couples went through very similar experiences evaluating each other's items. Upon moving in together, couples discovered that they had duplicate household items, especially kitchen items. Each couple described a surprisingly similar process for evaluating which of the two toasters, for example, got to stay in the home: which item was newer, was liked more, was in better shape, or whether or not the item had some sentimental value are some examples of the questions being asked about the duplicate items. In some instances, decisions about what to or not throw away could not be made, so other arrangements were made. Erica and Nathan chose

their space together, and they brought all of their belongings to their new house and sorted through everything together, comparing who had better belongings and tossing the discards out to Goodwill or storage, as was the case with Jack's belongings when he moved in with Molly.

In the case of Erica and Nathan, each person brought their kitchen cooking utensils, such as spoons, spatulas, whisks, and turners, with them during the move. Neither person wanted to give up their utensils, so Nathan put his utensils in their own drawer, and Erica put her utensils in a separate drawer. Erica and Nathan use each other's utensils (for example, Nathan does not have a whisk so he will use hers, but he prefers his cheese grater) but each person prefers to use their own. I asked Erica about the process of identifying duplicates and if duplicates were found what the process was for deciding what stayed and what was donated, sold, or thrown away. She replied:

> We actually, as far as the kitchen goes, we already got rid of a lot of duplicates. The weird thing is that our utensils are still separate. All of his utensils are in one drawer, and all of mine are in another drawer. But then, like, we mix our forks and knives together. --*Erica*

Nathan also commented on the utensil drawers, and further explained that he felt that the utensil drawers were not something he would typically like to have in his home, but at that point in time there was no amicable solution for the problem. Erica had made very clear her dislike of any items being left on the countertop, taking up "valuable real estate" and that everything should be tucked away in drawers and cabinet whenever possible.

> I do hate though that I keep a utensil drawer. I especially hate the fact that everything is shoved in here and bunched up. It's driving me nuts… I would probably put in some sort of dividers so it wasn't like one big mess…And I'd probably put in a different type of liner that wouldn't bunch up or maybe stick it down but that seemed kind of tacky. It wasn't worth divvying it up, so yeah that's her utensil drawer and that's my utensil drawer. --*Nathan*

Lissa and Fred were at a different stage in their lives than the other three couples. They were getting married about four months after I finished my interviews. Lissa and Fred combined

all of their belongings upon Lissa moving into Fred's house; the items that were worn, or in worse shape than the duplicates were placed in boxes and stored in the garage, and any items they did not have they registered for as gifts for their upcoming wedding. Conversations about how Lissa and Fred put their household spaces together and combined possessions always had a pause to further explain what would be happening in the near future. For example, when speaking with Lissa about how the kitchen space was arranged and what possessions she brought to the home, she was quick to say:

> I am a crazy person. Listen to this. I looked at, like, 15 different light blue towels. And we're registering, so we can obviously change that we want light blue towels now and it's not gonna be a big deal and we can just use what we have……we can sell all this stuff when we register. So some things are mine some are his. Most of the dishes are his, these are actually mine, but I think we'll sell these too. --*Lissa*

It seemed like Lissa was less concerned with the way things were currently set up because the period between moving in together and getting married was sort of a limbo period, like a period of time she was waiting through to move on to the next stage of her life. Lissa was not waiting in a negative way, by any means, but it seemed as though she was enjoying putting her touch on the house, and helping Fred to fix up his home in hopes of selling it and moving on. At the time of the interview, Fred and Lissa had no immediate plans to move, but she did mention during the home tour that there were other more pressing issues going on, like planning their wedding, her finding a new job, and Fred graduating with his doctorate, and the way the house was set up works for now, and in their next house, they would have more room.

Molly and Jack have discussed marriage, but they had not become officially engaged when I last spoke with them. Since Jack moved into Molly's apartment, and they both felt that the majority of her possessions were superior in quality and wear to his possessions, Molly's apartment remained rather unchanged when Jack moved in.

Tara and Chad moved into their own space together, but the apartment was furnished with hand me downs from Tara's family. Nearly every item in the apartment belongs not to Tara or Chad, but to Tara's family. Tara and Chad did not set up their new apartment upon moving in. Tara's mother nominated herself to put the kitchen together because she knew exactly what items she had packed for Tara and Chad. Chad only brought a rice cooker (a gift from Tara's mother) and a microwave with him from his old apartment. Every other item, from silver wear to pots and pans came from Tara's family. Tara says:

> Actually I think my mom ended up figuring out the [kitchen] space for us, 'cause she was here helping us move, and she gets all into the 'It would be better if there was something here.', and then she...I think she ended up doing most of that. And, um, we kinda followed along. I mean, the cupboard has kind of like, wherever we would put things we'd just stick things there and hope that we remember it. Same with the fridge, but...I think Chad moved certain things in the cupboard, like the plates and stuff. He arranged that. I just kept it that way. --*Tara*

Since Chad came to the United States from the UK for school, he arrived with a suitcase of clothes and some books. He had very little to contribute to the space, so he was grateful for Tara's family's generosity. However, the space and kitchen items he would need to cook "a proper Sunday roast" do not exist in their current home. These tools do exist at Tara's family's home. One Christmas, Tara's mother bought all of the ingredients she felt she would need to make "a proper Sunday roast" and all of the fixings and asked Chad to cook for the family. He did so, happily, because it was in a house with a "proper" kitchen with ample space and tools to prepare and cook the meal.

In summary, the kitchen space and the tools available are major influences on the kinds of foodwork that go on in a household. Ultimately, though, if a person hates cooking, the nicest, most grand kitchen full of state of the art appliances will not muster up the desire to spend time doing something that is perceived to be a chore. However, for those who identify as cooks, and to some degree either do not mind preparing evening meals or actually enjoy cooking, an ill-

equipped kitchen did little to deter cooking in the home. If anything, those who were on the fence about one aspect of preparing a meal (for instance, cleaning up), the undesirable tasks could be negotiated out to the partner in the spirit of cooperation and teamwork.

Eating

Weekday breakfasts were less affected by cohabitation, since partners tended to remain independent in their breakfast eating because of work schedules and commutes. A partner might slather some peanut butter on a bagel for her partner so he can leave for work more efficiently in the morning, but breakfast routines were largely unchanged upon cohabitation, except for shared weekend brunches. Dinner meals were typically the only daily shared meal.

Erica and Nathan have the most significant dietary divergence of my four participant couples in terms of what they individually preferred to eat versus what was cooked in the home. Nathan is a mostly vegetarian Tara and Chad have similar tastes, but often prepared their meals separately resulting in an odd eating pattern that is neither divergent nor convergent and could best be described as indifferent. Molly and Jack were striving towards convergence, but Molly was self-described as very particular about the ways in which her foods were prepared, and she had a long list of dislikes and a propensity for not wanting to try foods she deemed too far outside her comfort zone. Molly doesn't like onions, and Jack stated that he does not mind not having onions in his diet, so onions in homemade food have been eliminated from his diet. Jack and Molly get carry out most nights during the week; he has the freedom to order his meal as he likes it, and she can do the same. Molly and Jack seem to be resisting convergence through ordering separate dinners, but Molly has shown interest in trying bites of Jack's food that she would never ordinarily order.

Nathan has a hectic schedule that includes many evening hours working from home. He is fine with Erica making plans for dinner, but Erica gets tired of cooking and wishes that Nathan would take over some of those duties sometimes. He typically cooks on the weekend, but unlike Fred, he views food as something very utilitarian. Food is meant to be eaten to provide energy for his daily tasks and activities. He prefers to eat tasty food, but for him it all boils down to function. He will eat whatever is available to him, and is less concerned with the tastiness of everyday food, or variety for that matter.

Dietary convergence only occurred in one couple (Fred and Lissa) and only to a certain extent. There are still foods that Lissa does not like that Fred loves, but they have negotiated ways for Fred to still eat what he loves and share a meal together. Bove et al. (2003) discovered that dietary convergence was nearly universal in the twenty couples they interviewed, and at the onset of cohabitation, partners entered a period of experimentation with food in an effort to learn more about the preferences of their partners and the goal was always convergence—to find foods that they both liked and could eat together. Each of the twenty couples eventually merged their individual food systems into a coupled food system. I believe the reason why I did not observe any instances of complete convergence in the participant couples in my study was because they were still in the process of merging, and especially with Fred and Lissa, any areas of divergence had been addressed and solved to the couple's satisfaction.

This indicates that convergence is the goal of most couples who live together, mostly because it is most convenient to cook one meal for two people, but also because there is a certain pleasure in sharing the same food with your romantic partner, and knowing that that partner will be satisfied with what was prepared. Kaufmann (2011) supports the idea that "cooks are often not really sure whether they are cooking because they like it….or because others enjoy the meals

they make." With that, many cooks cannot pinpoint their motivations for being the primary cook, especially when it is a role that is taken on willingly. To Kaufmann (2011), this shows that cooking can be a selfless act that no matter how much effort making a meal can take, there is something inherently pleasurable in all of the effort that makes it worthwhile. When a romantic partner expresses appreciation for the efforts being made to satisfy a want or a need, the chore becomes labor of love; a task that is difficult to categorize as a chore or an obligation because of the intimate and emotional nature of providing a meal (Kaufmann, 2011; DeVault, 1994).

In order to make sense of how two food identities might be combined into one, it is important to first understand "food individualism" (Bove et al., 2003, p. 34), or the ways in which couples establish and manage food systems by allowing for partners to consume foods differently from each other to reduce the likelihood of conflict over food choice and dietary differences. When couples express the dislike of certain food items, efforts were made to eliminate those foods from shared dinnertime meals, rather than allowing much food individualism.

In Bove et al.'s (2003) study, the most simple form of food individualism occurred when partners were able to customize their shared meals to cater to their specific tastes, but the same basic meal was prepared. For example, partners added spices, condiments, and sauces to their own plates of food that were not originally part of the served meal. The same is true of the participants in my study to varying degrees. For example, Fred and Lissa cook the same basic meal and he will sometimes cook onions and add them to his portion. Tara and Chad prepared their own individual meals, and seemed to embrace food individualism when cooking at home.

Only one clear attempt at dietary convergence was made on the part of Tara or Chad. Tara's Taiwanese mother lives close enough to the couple that she is able to make homemade

Taiwanese dishes in her home and deliver them to her daughter and her partner. Chad frequently eats Tara's mother's prepared frozen meals with Tara. However, Chad does not like mushrooms, and the dishes frequently contain a wide variety of mushrooms. During one interview, Chad expressed to Tara that he would enjoy the Taiwanese dishes more if her mother left out the mushrooms. Chad was making an attempt at converging diets by removing an item from meals commonly shared between them. Tara said that she thought about mentioning to her mother that Chad was not fond of mushrooms, but she felt that her mother may be offended and thought it best to tell Chad to just pick the mushrooms out of the meals.

Cleaning Up

All of the participant couples communicated the house rule that if one person cooks, the other cleans up any mess made in the process of cooking the meal. It is recognized that cooking a meal is a laborious task and one way to reciprocate the time and effort invested is to do dishes, wipe off countertops, and put away leftovers and unused food items. If both partners helped in the preparation of the meal, they also both assisted with the clean-up.

However, if couples have different philosophies about when the cleaning should occur, conflict could result. Or, if the couple is trying to avoid conflict, two systems might develop or one person might adopt the other person's system. Nathan and Erica have two different approaches to cooking and cleaning. Erica's father was a professional chef, and in her childhood household, nothing was more important than the presentation of a hot, fresh meal. Her family ate as soon as the meal was ready, and left the clean-up of the kitchen until after everyone was finished eating and had relaxed after the meal. Erica has adopted the same approach to cooking and cleaning. Nathan, however, likes to clean up as he cooks leaving little to no mess to clean up when the meal is finished cooking. He would also rather clean the kitchen before eating his meal.

Upon moving in together, Erica tried to adopt Nathan's cooking and cleaning approach, even though she states that "whoever cooks doesn't clean," in adopting Nathan's clean-as-you-cook approach, she's doing both the cooking and a majority of the cleaning. As Erica notes:

> It's pretty much whoever cooks doesn't clean, for the most part. However, since I have met you, I at least like put everything in the dishwasher that's dishwasher safe, and then that leaves you with just two pots or something. But I used to not do that, I used to just cook your meal, serve it hot, and then worry about cleaning later. ---*Erica, to Nathan*

I do not think Erica realized that she contradicted herself when she said that whoever does not cook cleans up, but then mentioned that as time has progressed in their relationship, she had adopted Nathan's method of cleaning up as she cooks. Lissa and Fred both communicated that cooking and kitchen cleaning were traded tasks and agreed that they were shared to each other's satisfaction. I did not realize at the time of the interviews the contradictory nature of what was being said and future studies will need to be conducted to further investigate the significance of these themes.

Summary

If one person cooks, the other cleans up the mess associated with the process of cooking the meal. Complaints about "cleaning up the mess" are still allowed, as are comments on how to reduce the messiness to ease the cleaner's job (as was the case of Nathan complaining about Erica's cooking style). If both partners helped in the preparation of the meal, they also both assisted with the clean-up. Cleaning up kitchen messes is an example of participating in the already established system put in place by the partner in charge of feeding work; cleaning involves putting kitchen items away according to the storage and organization system already put in place by the food worker. Skill is not entirely a factor in cleaning up, but the action is a

gesture acknowledging that the meal preparation or other feeding work is a laborious task, and another task should be performed in exchange.

Discussion

The first goal of this research study was to explore the ways in which couples approach the concept of dietary convergence, or the ways in which couples strive to eat similar, if not identical, diets. Upon cohabitation, couples enter into a period of experimentation where they intentionally try to identify foods that they mutually enjoy or prefer (Bove et al., 2003) and begin to learn differences in each other's diets. Discussions about particular recipes, food items, and favorite meals also occur during this time, all in attempts to achieve convergence.

Since the majority of the participant couples ate breakfast and lunch separately during the week, partners could pursue their own food interests without having to negotiate. This is consistent with Craig and Truswell's (1988) finding that when more opportunities are provided for individuals to pursue their own preferences, there was less potential for conflict when deciding what was to be served during the shared evening meal. Food individualism was an integral element of the food negotiation process that often served as a conflict management strategy to reduce potential disagreements (Carnevale and Pruitt, 1992).

Tara and Chad sometimes ate dinner at different times, often resulting in two entirely different meals, because both agreed that there was no sense in making a meal for two if both were not eating at the same time. For Molly and Jack, ordering carryout ensured that they each got precisely the food they wanted, prepared in the manner in which they wanted it, and the likelihood of satisfaction was at its highest. Food negotiations for couples in which one partner was especially narrow in his or her food choices often resulted in the shared home-cooked meal being defined by those narrow choices. Molly is self-described as a "picky" eater, but would

sometimes like to sample items that Jack ordered for his carry-out dinners. Bove et al. (2003) describe behaviors like Molly's as having a "lack of food-broadening experiences" causing an individual to be "intolerant of dietary change" (p. 31).

Lissa's attempts to integrate onions into her diet because Fred loved them were self-described as a failure. She made efforts to try them prepared in a variety of dishes, but eventually told Fred that she did not like onions. As a result, Fred cooked up onions separately and adds them to his own portions. She also wanted to like venison, since Fred is a hunter and typically has a wide variety of cuts of venison in his deep freezer. They started "Taco Thursday" as a way to incorporate venison into Lissa's diet through her favorite food, tacos. She expressed that she did not feel pressured to like onions or venison by Fred, and that the pressure was internally motivated. Lissa's internal motivations could be viewed in terms of the negotiation of food choices as a gendered process. Women often deny their own food preferences and default to the preferences of others (Brown & Miller, 2002; Charles & Kerr, 1986).

In couples who shared cooking responsibilities, both partners contributed to dinner decisions through conversation. In some instances, preferences were indicated through indifference, meaning one person would state that they did not care what was prepared, so the decision defaulted to the other partner. Sometimes, partners took turns accommodating each other's food preferences. In couples with one primary cook, decisions about what was to be prepared were made by that cook, regardless of the cook's gender. The preferences of the non-cooking partner often influenced what was prepared, at least considering whether or not the non-cook would like or dislike the meal.

Although gender roles are certainly at play to some degree in these relationships, the differences between the partners seem to be grounded in the ways in which they approach food

and attempts to deflect situations where conflict may arise (Bove et al., 2003; Bove & Sobal, 2006). Power in these relationships can be viewed in many ways, gender included, but the participant couples seemed to be demonstrating yielding and contending behaviors based on strong personalities. Bove et al. (2003, p. 38) describe the 'yielding' partner as the one who is easier to please and generally more tolerant, whereas the 'contending' partner has strong opinions about food preferences and household behaviors. The 'easy going' partner in each relationship was usually agreed upon and pointed out to me during the interview process, and in those cases, it was made clear that the person who was more particular was the person who was in charge of a majority of the decision making regarding foodwork (Carnevale and Pruitt, 1992; Klein & Johnson, 2000).

The second goal of this study was to understand the process by which a nutritional gatekeeper is determined in a household before children enter into the family and to explore whether or not that role was an individualistic or shared. The role of gatekeeper is not held exclusively by one person in these relationships; rather, the gatekeeper role is situational and conditional based on a variety of factors, including time, schedules, and disposition towards foodwork. The term gatekeeper implies that someone is able to block or limit how their household interacts with food. Even if one person is in charge of both shopping and cooking, that role is developed by both partners, slowly, over time.

Since dinner was usually the only meal shared at home on a consistent basis, dinner decision-making was an important time during which to view foodwork in action. Bove et al. (2003) found that "the non-cooking partner often exerted considerable influence on what was eaten," (p. 38) which led them to question the idea of one singular family food gatekeeper, and consider the role of all the family members in influencing the cooking and shopping partner.

Wansink (2006) determined that 72% of all foods that children eat are either directly or indirectly determined by the nutritional gatekeeper(s) in the home, and that gatekeepers can have an indirect influence of foods eaten outside of the home, but the influence of those in the household on the gatekeeper is not entirely understood nor has it been deeply explored.

There are other empirical works that substantiate the influence of the non-cooking partner on what foods are prepared in the home (Brown & Miller, 2002; De Bourdeaudhuij, 1997; De Bourdeaudhuij & Van Oost, 1998; Pill & Parry, 1989; Pliner, 1982; Savoca & Miller, 2001). Bove et al. (2003) believe that Charles & Kerr make a very convincing point that the food preparer has the "responsibility, but not control, over family food choices" (p. 38).

The attitudes and behaviors of the participant couples are reminiscent of the couples highlighted in Bove et al.'s (2003) study. Typically, the gatekeeper is viewed as a solitary influencer (usually the mother or wife), who has been placed in charge of both cooking and shopping (and planning). However, the couples in my study illustrated nutritional gatekeeping behaviors jointly, but not always in balance. Rather, some of the participant couples in my study demonstrated a shared guardianship of the gate where the foodwork activities are divided and shared between partners and can change depending on who has the time and the motivation to shop and/or cook. These couples showed another side to the issue in that negotiating foodwork is more of a compromise than it was in the past, that the negotiation process does not seem to be about gender roles on the surface, and that these roles are assigned based on career and time obligations more than any other factor. However, future studies need to be conducted that probe more exclusively about gender roles and their influence on assigning household tasks.

Conclusion

For the participant couples in my study who were adapting to a shared lifestyle, the role of nutritional gatekeeper is one that is shared between partners, although not always equally. Food comes into the home because someone brings it there, and it gets cooked because someone cooks it. The channels through which food passes into the home is seemingly under the control of the shopper, and the ways in which food is prepared in the home is seemingly under the influence of the cook. Sometimes, that person is one in the same, but it is possible that the person who shops is not the person who cooks. There are larger mechanisms at play than solely examining the ways in which food enters the home and the ways in which it is prepared; the gatekeeper can be a perceived power role.

If there is a primary person in charge of both shopping and cooking, that person does not make decisions in a vacuum. There is an abundance of planning work that goes into shopping and cooking, and what to shop for to cook is a decision that is made by the household. DeVault (1994) comments that the feeding work in the family is typically done by one (female) person, and her plan is executed from the planning stages to cleaning up after the meal. But his or her partner communicates preferences, likes and dislikes, and preparation techniques, either subtly or obviously, that influences what the perceived gatekeeper brings into the home and how it's prepared. The role of perceived gatekeeper is one of training and development of a physical and psychological nature. The partner in charge of doing is not necessarily the person who is in power. The gatekeeper is really the person who has the most influence over the feeding work and influence does not necessarily correlate to performance.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The following section discusses the health implications and limitations of qualitative research in general and more specifically relating to this study. I also share my thoughts on future directions of food-related research using IPA as a guide to frame data collection and analysis. Finally, I will share my reflections on conducting this study, my positionality within the study, and overall conclusions.

Health Implications

Studies that are aimed at understanding the food choices of newly married couples (Bove et al., 2003; Burke et al., 2004; Burke et al., 1999; Craig & Truswell, 1988) have found that when couples share living space, they begin a period of adjustment during which changes in lifestyle are almost always likely to occur, including adjustments to domestic routines. While couples are negotiating these lifestyle changes, they are likely to make adjustments to behaviors that may have a substantial influence on their immediate and long term mental and physical health (Bove et al., 2003; Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992; Connors et al., 2001; Coughenour, 1972; Gregory, 1999; Smock, 2000).

These changes in the life course have been studied in terms of their overall impact on health status (Feunekes et al., 1998; Furst et al., 1996; Kemmer et al.,1998), but few have examined cohabiting and its effects on more general food-related behaviors from a cultural, interpretative approach, and not solely on food choices or eating behaviors that have a direct impact on morbidity and mortality (Kemmer et al.,1998). The most interesting finding related to the procurement of food or food shopping was that the person who does the shopping is not always the same person who does the cooking. Cooks may be limited by what they can prepare based on

what is available in the home, but there are healthier and less healthy ways to prepare food. The shopper and the cook both have significant influence on what is prepared and eaten in the home. Ingredients matter, as does the preparation, but we are often cooking at someone else's request and shopping and cooking to their preferences.

The men in these relationships did not exhibit what DeVault (1994) would call the organizational work involved with feeding the family (p. 140), or "feeding work." It was much more likely that the women would participate in the feeding work, which includes meal planning, shopping, cooking, and cleaning. In the case of Fred and Lissa, the feeding work was managed by both partners to the point where the foodwork related duties in the house could easily be shuffled to the other person without a loss in productivity or food satisfaction. Neither Tara nor Chad had really taken any joint responsibility for their foodwork and often shopped, cooked and cleaned up after themselves, leaving cumulatively contributed tasks (like creating and taking out garbage) unattended.

Some of these couples were able to communicate preferences for foodwork-related tasks and negotiate responsibility for and complete those tasks because they were able to identify common goals early in their romantic relationships. If a partner felt comfortable expressing true feelings about household tasks and the other partner was willing to take over that responsibility, there were fewer opportunities for conflict to arise. However, if a couple was not willing or able to communicate preferences, or had a genuine lack of interest in completing any household work, the likely result was conflict. When considering food-related work, there are many opportunities throughout the day where harmony or discord could be observed. Food work is something we participate in multiple times daily and if there are communication issues surrounding foodwork, those issues could become apparent several times a day for extended periods of time.

The ways in which individuals viewed foodwork contributed to the likelihood that these tasks were adopted without contempt and completed to expectations; for those who enjoyed foodwork, it was not always viewed as a chore, rather as caring work. Kaufmann (2010, p. 222) summarizes this sentiment thoughtfully: "Cooks are often not really sure whether they are cooking because they like it (because it is an achievement and because it tastes good) or because others enjoy the meals they make." Much like any one thing we are good at doing, if we are praised for our abilities, we are more likely to engage in those activities and enjoy it. If cooking and other foodwork is viewed as a joyless chore, it will likely be a joyless chore.

The participants in my study tried to express their feelings in a way that would not be viewed as complaining. For the most part, participants were more likely to be slightly more critical of their partners (during individual interviews) and their behaviors but almost always offered some kind of rationalization for the reasons why their partners would act in such a manner. For example, a person would offer a criticism about the trash not being taken out, but would then state that their partner was extra busy yesterday and was sure to get to the chore later that day. Overall, partners were less likely to offer complaints about cooking or other foodwork in the same way they voiced issues about having to vacuum or clean bathrooms.

Kaufmann (2010) theorizes that by asking pointed questions about specific tasks that participants might not tell the whole truth; rather, most participants would not lie directly to the interviewer, but may lie to themselves. It was clear that those who viewed cooking as something they enjoyed that could sometimes be a chore had no problems talking about their interactions with food. Those who were cooking out of necessity found ways to rationalize why cooking was important and the steps they have taken to embracing foodwork. The participants often hid how difficult cooking was to them, either because of a perceived lack of time, skill, or desire. In these

acts of rationalization, it became clear to me that my participants know that foodwork is necessary and requires much work, but it is also alluring, mentally stimulating and emotionally charged in that successful attempts at foodwork can be rewarding but failures can be devastating to confidence and desire to cook. The pleasurable and desirable parts of cooking, the "cooking for love" aspects (Kaufmann, 2011, p. 173) "make us forget that may aspect of what we are doing are completely banal…Cooking for love provides individuals with an image with which they can identify; they can see themselves as creating family ties by sacrificing themselves for the sake of love."

There are many steps involved in deciding who in the household will be responsible for what tasks, and once those tasks are divided, duties are performed. Minor difficulties can build into major problems and can cause conflict in the relationship. When we are short on time, or physical or mental energy, or feel like we are the only ones making an effort, what seemed like an easy task can become insurmountable. Cooking is as much a cerebral task as it is a physical one because of the organizational work that is involved. In my particular study, I asked couples about the ways in which they have combined their lives and most conversations focused on how the couples were trying to make their lives more organized. Couples hinted at moments of discontent and disorganization but were quick to explain how those feelings were being addressed and improved. I did not explicitly ask about conflict in the couples' lives, rather, I asked about how the coupled differed in attitudes towards food and foodwork because I felt that it was a less guiding word than asking directly about conflicts.

In future studies, I believe it would be greatly advantageous to pointedly ask about conflict in their daily lives. The early stages of a couple's shared experiences are exercises in remaining in the "comfort zone" (Kaufmann, 2009, p. 22) for as long as possible; that is, to be as amicable as

possible regarding minor irritations. As couples gradually start to settle into their new lives, minor irritations could become major irritations when the system that was slowly building suddenly stops working or breaks down. The system for keeping track of what is at home in the pantry or refrigerator, what has been eaten recently, what will take the right amount of time to prepare, what is appropriate for their skill, and finally what people want to eat are just a few of the mental tasks the cook must accomplish. When this system breaks down, the effects are quickly felt when the next meal time occurs. Operating within these systems can be incredibly difficult for experienced cooks who truly enjoy the task at hand, and the thought of having to create a system can confound new or unwilling cooks. Some cooks have to convince themselves, as a coping mechanism, that foodwork is not all that complicated because it is something we have to do multiple times a day for the rest of our lives.

The participant couples demonstrated several ways in which a person can manage foodwork; when those management styles do not align with a partner's idea of how things should be done, it adds an additional layer of stress and resentment to a task that can be viewed as being no fun. For the couples in my study, and for Kaufmann's couples (2011, pp. 176-7) one of the most challenging parts of cooking a meal was coming up with an idea; Molly has eliminated that struggle in her daily decision making process by ordering from a menu. She has to think about what she wants and call a place and order it. There is little to no effort involved when compared to the organizational and mental work required to cook at home. For Molly, it makes more sense to pick up the phone and order dinner, and put a plate and flat ware in the dishwasher rather than cleaning up the pots and pans and utensils needed to cook the same meal at home.

Molly's system avoids many of the laborious parts of foodwork, and at the end of the meal, she is almost always satisfied, because someone at a restaurant had to do all of the feeding work.

When Jack asked her to make more home cooked meals, Molly suddenly had to decide if she was willing to forgo the restaurant-prepared meals and take on all of those aspects of feeding work. She did, reluctantly, but she holds a bit of resentment towards Jack because she is aware of the amount of work that is involved in creating a meal. This negotiation to their food system was, at the moment, treated like a minor conflict. Molly and Jack agreed on a new course to take in order to change the way the food system was operating. However, Molly has reverted back to her old system. The efforts behind feeding work are lost on Jack; before moving in with Molly, Jack's meals were ready to eat frozen meals, and that is his definition of eating more from home. Jack and Molly's individual approaches to food are very similar; Molly prefers freshly prepared food from a restaurant, and Jack prefers to purchase freezer case versions of Molly's restaurant food. Both are avoiding some of the most difficult aspects of feeding work, and in turn avoiding conflict over who should perform what tasks, but Jack thinks that since Molly knows more about cooking that it would be easier for her to cook from home rather than having him do it. Jack sees that there is organizational and physical work involved in preparing a meal, but because he perceives Molly to be more experienced in these kinds of labors, it would be less effort on her part to engage in cooking activities.

Deliberate efforts to engage in clear communication have to be made if the goal of dietary convergence is to be achieved. Sometimes sacrifices in food work and food preference must also be made. The reasons why these sacrifice and fights are occurring are often not clear to couples; they often do not realize why they are working towards dietary convergence. Kaufmann (2010, pp. 122-124) agrees that "everyday meals change as relationships develop" and everyday meals take on a new identity when prepared and eaten in the presence of a romantic partner. Upon moving in together, couples go through a period of adjustment where they slowly discover, day-

by-day, that meal times in their household have become routines. These routines can surprise some people because, when asked, they cannot express how it is that foodwork became their routine and responsibility.

If there is a breakdown in communication early in the relationship regarding household tasks, especially those tasks that specifically involve meal preparation, issues might arise later in the relationship when changes in the life course occur. Upon cohabiting, behaviors regarding food and eating are often made visible to a partner and to the person themselves for the first time, and incompatible interactions revolving around foodwork could become a source of stress for those couples. As suggested by the Life Course Perspective (Wethington & Johnson-Askew, 2009), those stressors can carry on throughout the life course as changes in the life course occur and lead to a detached understanding of the ways in which the performance of feeding work affects quality of life over time.

Since food is essential for life and is a part of our cultural and societal identities, food negotiations can be seen at every change in life trajectory (Carvalho, et al., 2007; Epstein et al., 2012; Falk et al., 1996; Anderson et al., 1998, Kemmer et al., 1998). Renegotiation is likely to occur again if another major life event happens. For example, upon living together, a communicative couple would discuss likes and dislikes regarding household duties, food preferences, and daily schedules, to name a few common activities. If this cohabiting couple chose to get married, we could anticipate that another adjustment would be made to accommodate a new life status. The couple may move to a new city, start a new job, or have children, too; as each of these events occurs, some adjustments are made to compensate for the changes, and sometimes full renegotiations of labor would be required. By looking at the ways in which food is involved in these sorts of negotiations, we can better understand the ways in which

the results of these negotiations influence food choices, attitudes, beliefs, feeding work and subsequent health outcomes (Anderson et al, 1998, Kemmer et al., 1998; Lee et al., 2005).

The participant couples were in transition or anticipating one in the near future, within the first year of living together. For Nathan and Erica, it was Nathan's approaching graduation and a move across the country to start a new job. Fred and Lissa are getting married in the summer. They were already anticipating a renegotiation of roles due to jobs, changing schedules, and moving. If these couples become parents, the patterns that are established now have the potential to impact their future health status and also that of their children (Burke et al., 1999; Schafer et al., 1999; Smock, 2000).

However, the ways in which we can observe and reflect upon these life course transitions are limited. Wethington and Johnson-Askew (2009, p. 79) call for "objectively measured" studies that can be "factored into intervention designs," and miss mentioning the opportunities for, and the benefits of, research on food-related practices that are still focused on society, culture, and family, but are not intervention focused. Wethington and Johnson-Askew (2009) determined that more research is needed that focuses on the social networks involved in the food decision making process, and that examining the context of family provides important insights into dietary change. However, they leave the interpretation of what constitutes a family open for interpretation. Since a majority of life course research and nutritional gatekeeper research focuses primarily on the nuclear family, selecting couples before they become parents is critical to understanding the ways in which couples establish the food decision making process and its future health effects.

Entry into a romantic partnership has been shown to be associated with an increased likelihood of obesity, and the association was strongest for couples (married or unmarried) who

were cohabiting for two or more years (The & Gordon-Larsen, 2009). To date, most inquiries into spouses or partners changing eating habits upon marriage or cohabiting have been quantitative and/or longitudinal in nature (Pachucki et al., 2011). This study advances our theoretical and practical understanding of the foodwork practices of newly cohabiting couples, and to what extent the role of nutritional gatekeeper exists in those relationships.

Limitations of Qualitative Research

In my opinion, qualitative research is often compared to quantitative research when discussions about the limitations of qualitative research occur. While both are valid approaches to research questions, some research questions cannot be addressed efficiently or effectively by one method or another. Research quality is heavily dependent on the individual skills of the researcher, and both qualitative and quantitative researchers are influenced by personal biases and idiosyncrasies. Rigor is also difficult to maintain, assess, and demonstrate, and it could be argued that qualitative research is more burdensome in this way. The volume of data generated by my study, or most other qualitative studies, makes analysis and interpretation of interviews, observations, photographs and other data time consuming, tedious, and nearly impossible to replicate. Unfortunately, qualitative research is sometimes not as well understood and accepted as quantitative research within the scientific community.

The researcher's presence during data gathering, which is often unavoidable in qualitative research, can affect the subjects' responses. However, any interaction with participants has the possibility of influencing responses. One of the benefits of interacting with participants face-to-face is having the opportunity to clarify inquiries and personally observe participants during data collection. Additionally, issues of anonymity and confidentiality can present problems when presenting qualitative findings. Opportunities for misrepresentation of participants is also

possible in all kinds of research, but in phenomenological qualitative studies (Smith et al., 2009), the goal is to present findings as the researcher being a part of the participants' world (Van Manen, 1990), and therefore the data becomes an amalgamation of shared experience.

Limitations of this study.

Limitations for this particular study are merely in the approach I took to data collection. A future study might elicit richer or more robust results if I were to interview the couples before they moved in together, in order to contrast what they were like after having moved in together. I could also interview the couple multiple times over a period of months or throughout the course of a year in order to capture the transitions and adjustments being made over time. Because of the complex nature of culture, gender, and economic structures within the home, future studies could focus more heavily on those sociocultural aspects of living together and their individual or combined impact on food-related behaviors and domestic tasks. Lastly, recruiting a larger sample that was less localized might result in a variety of findings that may help explain some of the nuanced behaviors I observed from the sample included in this study.

Additionally, I had a limited capacity to comment on class and ethnicity because I only had one couple that varied culturally in that one couple comprised of a Taiwanese-American and a British-American. However, it is important to note that I tried to recruit a culturally homogenous sample in order to stick to the tenets of IPA. Upon further reflection, I have found that Smith, Flowers, & Larkin (2009) offer examples of their experiences using IPA in a variety of settings, and encourage researchers to make their own decisions based on the parameters of their own studies.

Future Directions

Future research would benefit by investigating foodwork, food spaces, and food-related behaviors over time, in various cultural and economic settings, and crafting specific inquiries into gender roles, cultural quirks, monetary differences, and sexual orientation. Additionally, I believe it would be beneficial for other food scholars who are concerned with food-related behaviors and decision making to consider IPA when designing studies.

When designing this study, I considered many IPA-centered designs that have been used in the past to study health-related phenomena (Clare, 2002; Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999; Flowers, 2008; Larkin and Griffiths, 2004; Smith, 1994a; 1994b; 1996; 2004; Smith & Osborn, 1993). I discovered that there are several ways to approach my research questions. For example, if this study were designed to follow the couples longitudinally, I would interview the couples over a course of time at particular changes in trajectories in the life course to see how food-related behaviors might change. For a 'before-and-after' effect, I would identify couples who are about to move in with each other, interview them, and interview them again upon moving in together. Both of these approaches allow for interviewing the participant couples more than once, because they have been changed by a particular experience and the goal of the study would be to take a snapshot of life at multiple points along the way, or before and after the changes in life course.

I also considered that IPA can be used to develop a multi-perspective view on one concept. For example, Larkin and Griffiths' (2004) explored the experience of risk from people engaged in different risky behaviors, like Ecstasy-users and bungee-jumpers. The exploration of one phenomenon from multiple perspectives can give a triangulated view on a particular phenomenon. To look at couples adapting to a shared lifestyle using food-related behaviors to

discuss that adaptation, the study would involve interviewing different types of couples from all walks of life and types of living arrangements (such as a newly married couple, a couple who is not married but living together, a gay or lesbian couple, adult daughter returning home to live with her mother, etc.). The multi-perspective view on a phenomenon is a well suited design for eliciting more detailed accounts of a particular topic, but the design does not provide rich and particular accounts of one unit (such as one participant or one couple). The focus is on the phenomenon, not the participant. Inevitably, I felt that this concept-driven approach was too large a project to undertake as an individual, but would be of value to conduct as part of a larger research focus.

Reflections

Research quality is heavily dependent on the individual skills of the researcher, and both qualitative and quantitative researchers are influenced by personal biases and idiosyncrasies. As a student researcher, I have a few courses of action that I took during my data collection in analysis that, should I have the opportunity to change in the future, I would change. I believe that asking myself my own research questions, and answering them, would be a valuable exercise in beginning to understand my own biases coming into the research process. As a person who is interested in all things food-related, I often forget that there are still people in this world who believe that fast food is safe enough to eat for lunch every day, do not realize chicken nuggets were once chickens, and who do not know that "all-natural," when printed on the side of a box of macaroni and cheese, means next to nothing.

As for my positionality in the conduct of this dissertation, I viewed myself as the primary data collection instrument during my interactions with the participants. At times, it was difficult to hold my tongue from offering advice about food, eating, and kitchen spaces. I wanted to share

relationship advice ("My partner and I found a way around the problem you're talking about!") or cooking advice ("Your pasta was mushy because you cooked it in the microwave—don't do that!") or shopping advice ("I can't believe you shop at the supermarket when you are literally steps away from the local organic grocer—organics really aren't that much more expensive than conventional items!"). In many ways, I was using my own relationship and my own experiences as a means to understand the positions of the participants in the study. I was conscious of these questions, and I tried to position follow-up questions in a way that helped me understand the participants' views rather than sharing my own.

What seems to be common food-related knowledge to me is not always common knowledge to participants or people in general. Sometimes, I did not ask my participants about some of their more simple interactions with food because I felt like, though my own experiences, I understood their process. I was using my own history with food and my experiences developing my sense of self as a way to relate to the participants, creating at least one instance of unconscious bias. One couple talked about wanting to prepare more healthy foods, and I remembered to ask, "What do you consider healthy food?" knowing that the definition of a loaded word like "healthy" or "a meal" could vastly differ from one person to another. I feel that sometimes I missed opportunities to follow up with participants about the ways in which they defined common terminology. I only realized the significance of commonly defining words and phrases upon data analysis when I read the transcripts. However, participants often provided a rich picture of their food lives when considering the interviews as a glimpse into their lives as a whole, and their definitions of those words were provided in an alternate way and in great detail.

Qualitative inquiry can vary greatly in terms of the ways in which a researcher ultimately chooses to conduct her research. One central goal in most, if not all, qualitative research is to reduce power differentials between the researcher and the researched. According to Karnieli-Miller, Strier & Pessach (2009), qualitative researcher is a departure from the power issues in quantitative research in that quantitative research sets the research up as the person of authority in the research relationship. The research process can become democratized, which has its benefits and disadvantages. I did not experience any negative democratizing effects pushed upon me by participants: I did, however, have instances where I wanted to get my participants involved in the research in ways that may not have been necessary.

During analysis and write-up, I used my understanding of what was shared in order to create subordinate and superordinate themes. I struggled with whether or not to go back to the participant couples and ask them if they thought my themes made sense to them. Ultimately I decided that member checking would not be a good idea. The couples did not get a chance to read the other interviews, or to even hear what their partner said during the individual interview. I was the only person in the position to generate themes about what I saw happening in the bigger picture; the couples were not. This might have given me all the power in terms of creating a narrative about the experiences of these couples, but I was the only person who heard all four of these couples' stories, and therefore the only person in a position to tell those four stories. I used reflective journaling, kept field notes, and photographs to aid me in this task. I exposed my own vulnerability in my analysis in ways similar to my participants. This is based on my belief that I have to be in touch with who I am, and understand how I make sense of my own world in order to understand how they make sense out of their worlds.

A number of potential refinements of my analysis were considered and abandoned. For example, when I began to write up my findings, I felt that I was limited in my abilities to comment on race and ethnicity within the context of this study and I did not quite understand why I had these hesitations. I realize now that those feelings were a result of the culturally homogenous study participants; in other words, the participants in this study were quite a bit like me. I would not have been afraid to comment on race and ethnicity had the participants been from a culture other than my own. I would have studied the appropriate sources and been more aware of the fact that I was studying people from a culture other than my own. As a member of the culture I was studying, I simply failed to realize that it takes extra effort to be hyper-aware of a group with which one is familiar or included within.

In some ways, I may have felt that it was easier to recruit a sample that was more like me rather than different from me. I feared that if I sampled from other cultures that I might miss something substantial, because I could have missed it as a cultural outsider. In reality, I would have been forced to ask more of the baseline questions that I did not ask because I was sampling people similar to me and ran with assumptions that I did not even know I was making at the time—like "healthy" was a word that was commonly defined by all and did not merit further definition. I missed more as a cultural insider by being unaware of my unconscious bias than I think I would have had I been a cultural outsider of a non-familiar group.

I tried to be kind to myself, having little experience designing my own study and conducting my own research. To live with my mistakes and figure out how to fix them for the next interview, for the next couple, and be aware of those mistakes and how the mistakes might influence the outcome of my study. At first, I was concerned with thinking of a really great question to ask during the interviews, and how to stay consistent in each interview. I struggled

with many of the same issues with which new researchers find challenging, and working through those obstacles made me a better researcher. I was able to tap in to new resources (using Atlas.ti for coding research and using an Echo SmartPen to record interviews), approach research methodology from a new perspective (using IPA to study food-related behaviors) and methods from new perspectives (taking part in a home tour as a way to learn about my participants in an environment in which they are most comfortable).

Summary

People can forget what all cooking entails; it is the "feeding work" that DeVault (1994) describes that makes cooking an overwhelming task and causes enthusiasm for it all to fade. The partners who take on foodwork are facing "hidden difficulties" (Kaufmann, 2011, p. 171) in that they are not aware that foodwork "always involves an element of self-sacrifice" (p. 173); it is in that sacrifice that familial bonds begin to form. The participant couples recognize this on some level, and Kaufmann (2011, p. 173) hypothesizes that people feel guilty when they reject foodwork and the bonds that foodwork can create, so it is much easier to suffer in silence, or convince one's self that the sacrifice is necessary because we all have to eat, and it is best to eat well. This study aimed to problematize the commonly held perspective of the role of food in everyday life as one that employs dualisms (healthy versus unhealthy, calories in/calories out), and add to the growing body of research that focuses on food not as a cause of morbidity and mortality, but as a cultural item that can shape life-long behaviors.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Food-related Behaviors Intake Survey

Food-related Behaviors Intake Survey

1. Do you consider yourself to be one or more of the following (circle all that apply):
   Straight Gay or Lesbian Bisexual
   Transgender

   Other (please explain)_____

2. Relationship status (circle one)
   Single Married Partnered Boyfriend/girlfriend

   Other (explain): _____

3. Living arrangement: Please specify how many of each of the following types of relationships exist in your current living situation
   _____ I live alone
   _____ Spouse
   _____ Partner
   _____ Boyfriend or girlfriend
   _____ Friend/roommate(s)
   Other: (explain) _____

4. How long have you been in your current romantic relationship?
   (Example: circle 1 year and 6 months)

   Years: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 or more
   Months: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

5. If you are romantically involved with one of the people in your household, please indicate the length of time you have lived together.

   Years: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 or more
   Months: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

6. Household income (circle one)
   Under $15,000 $50,000-$74,999

$15,000-24,999 $75,0000-$99,999
$25,000-$34,999 $100,000 or higher
$35,000-$49,999

7. Does someone in your household plan meals for your household? Yes No

    a. If so, who is responsible for meal planning? Please explain if you'd like.

8. Does someone in your household shop for groceries for your household? Yes No

    a. If so, who is primarily responsible for grocery shopping? Please explain if you'd like.

    b. If someone does shop for groceries, how often does grocery shopping occur during an average week?

9. Does someone in your household prepare meals for your household? Yes No

    a. If so, who is primarily responsible for preparing meals? Please explain if you'd like.

10. How many breakfast meals are prepared in the home during an average week? Note: the meal can be prepared in the home but eaten elsewhere.

    None 1-2 3-5 6+

11. How many lunch meals are prepared in the home during an average week? Note: the meal can be prepared in the home but eaten elsewhere.

    None 1-2 3-5 6+

12. How many dinner meals are prepared in the home during an average week? Note: the meal can be prepared in the home but eaten elsewhere.

    None 1-2 3-5 6+

13. If you are romantically involved with one of the people in your household, how often do you eat meals with that person? (select all that apply)

    Dinner: All Most Some Few Never
    Lunch: All Most Some Few Never
    Breakfast: All Most Some Few Never

APPENDIX B: Semi-Structured Interview Question Examples

- How couple met
- How long couple has been together
- How long couple has lived together
- Has the couple ever broken up for any period of time, and why
- Basic information about where they typically go to eat
- Who does the shopping? The cooking? The cleaning in the kitchen? The meal planning?
- How do you eat differently? Similarly?
- Do you feel that the food-related duties in your relationship are divided to your satisfaction? Tell me about the food-related duties in your relationship and how they are divided
- If you could change something about your partner and how he or she interacts with food, what would it be?
- Do you think your partner would change anything about the ways in which you interact with food?
- Are there any activities that you wish you did more or less individually, or together?
- Tell me about what you're doing
- Who typically does the cooking? Shopping?
- How do you feel about your duties?
- Do you have a list/plan/recipe? How do you plan meals?

- What do you think that says about you as a couple, and the ways in which you as a couple identify with food?
- How do you feel about your relationship with food now, as opposed to before you moved in with your partner?
- How do you feel that your interactions with food and eating have changed since living with your partner?
- How have your habits changed? Have you developed any new routines or habits?
- What are foods that you no longer eat or cook upon moving in with your partner?
- What are foods that you now cook often upon moving in with your partner, or routines that you've developed especially for your partner?
- Please tell me the story of how you met. (Narrative)
- What do you think that says about you as a couple, and the ways in which you as a couple identify with food?
- How do you feel about your relationship with food now, as opposed to before you moved in with your partner? (Contrast)
- How do you feel that your interactions with food and eating have changed since living with your partner? (Contrast)
- How have your habits changed? Have you developed any new routines or habits? (Contrast)
- How would other people or couples describe you and your partner through the food you eat? (Circular)
- Who typically does the cooking? Shopping? (Structural)
- How do you feel about your household duties? (Evaluative)

- How do you plan meals? Do you have a list/plan/recipe? (Evaluative/
- What are foods that you now cook often upon moving in with your partner, or routines that you've developed especially for your partner? (Comparative)
- Tell me about the process of moving in together. What's been easier or harder than you thought? (Narrative/Evaluative)

APPENDIX C: IRB Approval

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

To: KATHLEEN R. GILBERT
HEALTH, PHYS ED AND RECREATION

From: IU Human Subjects Office
Office of Research Administration – Indiana University

Date: September 19, 2012

RE: **NOTICE OF EXPEDITED PROTOCOL RENEWAL APPROVAL**

Protocol Title: Food Identity Probes: How Relationships Influence Dietary Behaviors

Protocol #: 1109006681

Funding Agency/Sponsor: None

IRB: IRB-IUB, IRB00000222

Expiration Date: September 18, 2013

The above-referenced protocol was reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB-IUB). The protocol is approved as Active - Open to Enrollment for a period of September 19, 2012 through September 18, 2013. This approval does not replace any departmental or other approvals that may be required.

If you submitted and/or are required to provide participants with an informed consent document, study information sheet, or other documentation, a copy of the enclosed approved stamped document(s) is enclosed and must be used.

Please note that as the principal investigator (or faculty sponsor in the case of a student protocol) of this study, you assume the following responsibilities:

1. **CONTINUING REVIEW:** You must receive re-approval of ongoing research prior to the protocol's expiration date (noted above). You may receive a renewal reminder from our office approximately two months prior to the expiration date; however, it is your responsibility to submit the applicable protocol documentation to the IRB in a timely manner. If continued approval is not received by the expiration date, the study will automatically expire, requiring all research activities, including enrollment of new subjects, interaction and intervention with current participants, and analysis of identified data to cease.

2. **AMENDMENTS:** You must request approval from the IRB of any proposed changes to the research prior to implementation. An amendment form can be obtained at: http://researchadmin.iu.edu/HumanSubjects/hs_forms.html.

3. **UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS AND NONCOMPLIANCE:** You must report unanticipated problems and noncompliance to the IRB according to the Unanticipated Problems and Noncompliance SOP, which can be found at: http://researchadmin.iu.edu/HumanSubjects/hs_policies.html.

4. **COMPLETION:** You must promptly notify the IRB when the research is complete. To notify the IRB of study closure, please obtain a close-out form at: http://researchadmin.iu.edu/HumanSubjects/hs_forms.html.

5. **LEAVING THE INSTITUTION:** You must notify the IRB of the disposition of the research when you leave the institution.

Note: SOPs exist covering a variety of topics that may be relevant to the conduct of your research. For more information on the relevant policies and procedures, go to http://researchadmin.iu.edu/HumanSubjects/hs_policies.html.

You should retain a copy of this letter and any associated approved study documents (e.g. informed consent or information sheet) for your records. Please refer to the project title and number in future correspondence with our office. Additional information is available on our website at http://researchadmin.iu.edu/HumanSubjects/index.html. Please contact our office if you have questions or need further assistance.

Thank you.

APPENDIX D: Recruitment Scripts

Email recruitment script to colleagues/script for informally talking with colleagues about recruiting for the study:

Colleagues,

I am looking to recruit participants for my study. Do you, or someone you know, conform to the following?

(a) over the age of 21

(b) express willingness to participate in the study and be available over the course of 30 consecutive days—all 30 days will not be active days.

(c) be willing to take part in research that involves a tour of the home, interviews, and observations of cooking at home and shopping outside of the home (in public)

In addition to the above conditions, a potential participant should be in either of these personal situations:

(a) be in a coupled (romantic) relationship

(b) live exclusively with your romantic partner for no longer than 1 year

(c) do not have children, and are not pregnant and do not plan on becoming pregnant throughout the course of the study (please self-disclose your situation)

Potential participants in this study would be interested in answering the following question: "Tell me about the ways in which you interact with food, both individually and as a couple" through photographs, blogging, and other interactive activities?

Couples would need to be able to participate in the study over the course of 30 days, and be willing to communicate times during which researchers could observe and interview both in public and in their homes. The overall time commitment of each couple should average about 20 hours over the course of the month. Upon completion of the study, the couple will be given a $50 Visa gift card. If participants consent to be in the study, but do not complete they study, they will be given one $5 Visa gift card to compensate them for their time. If you can think of anyone who might be interested, please give them my email address (nkdewitt@indiana.edu) and ask them to email me if they think they would like to participate. You can also ask them if they would be comfortable with you giving me their email addresses so I might contact them personally.

Thanks!

Natalie

Screening email to potential participants identified through researcher's contacts:

Greetings!

Thanks for your interest in the study. One of our mutual colleagues/friends thought you would like to participate. Before I say more about the study, do you think you and your partner meet the following requirements for participation?

If you don't, do you know of anyone who might be interested?

(a) over the age of 21

(b) express willingness to participate in the study and be available over the course of 30 consecutive days

(c) be willing to take part in research that involves a tour of the home, interviews, and observations of cooking at home and shopping outside of the home (in public)

In addition to the above conditions, a potential participant should be in this personal

situation:

--- be in a coupled (romantic) relationship & live exclusively with your romantic partner

for no more than 1 year.

---do not have children, and are not pregnant and do not plan on becoming pregnant throughout the course of the study (please self-disclose your situation)

If you think you & your partner meet the above requirements, you might be eligible for the study. You and your partner must agree to be in the study together in order to be eligible.

Potential participants in this study would be interested in answering the following question: "Tell me about the ways in which you interact with food, both individually and as a couple" through photographs, blogging, and other interactive activities?

Couples would need to be able to participate in the study over the course of 30 days, and be willing to communicate times during which researchers could observe and interview both in public and in their homes. The overall time commitment of each couple should average about 20 hours over the course of the month. Upon completion of the study, the couple will be given a $50 Visa gift card. If participants consent to be in the study, but do not complete they study, they will be given one $5 Visa gift card to compensate them for

their time. If you would like to meet with me in person to discuss the study more, please let me know when and where you would like to meet.

Thanks!

Natalie DeWitt

Recruitment email for when a colleague gives researcher an email address of someone the colleague identified as a possible participant:

Greetings,

You have been identified through a mutual contact as possibly being interested in participating in a week-long study about food identities. If you would like to learn more about the study, or express you interest in participating, please reply to this email and we can set up a time to meet and discuss the requirements of the study.

Thanks,

Natalie DeWitt

APPENDIX E: Participant Case Reports

Molly & Jack.

Molly and Jack have been dating for a year and three months and have lived together since Thanksgiving of 2012. At the time of their initial interview, they had been living together for four months. They are relatively close in age (Molly, 28, Jack 27). They met through Jack's father, who is a pharmacist. Molly is also a pharmacist and she worked with Jack's father while she attended college. Jack's father used to comment to Molly that he "wished that his son would meet someone like her". Molly and Jack eventually met at a work/dinner function, and Jack tried to ask Molly out on several dates on the random occasions they met over the next four years, but the timing was never quite right. Molly had just gotten out of a long term relationship with another man, whom she lived with, and on another occasion they were living in different states and Jack happened to be visiting a friend in the state in which she lived.

It wasn't until Molly was to go on a trip to Las Vegas for a conference with Jack's father that she and Jack connected. Jack's father was unable to attend so he sent his son, who is an engineer, in his place. They spent the weekend in Las Vegas attending the conference and they both agreed that the anniversary of their first date is their flight out to Las Vegas. They celebrate that anniversary by Jack purchasing Molly flowers on the month anniversary of that date, just as his grandfather did for his grandmother on the monthly anniversary of their first date.

They refer to each other as boyfriend and girlfriend. Molly had lived with female roommates and boyfriends in the past, but this was Jack's first time living with a girlfriend. He moved from his apartment in the town in which he works to Molly's apartment, which is about an hour away from his workplace. Part of the discussion of moving in together involved who would be moving where—Molly to Jack's apartment, or Jack to Molly's apartment. They both

agreed that the town in which Molly lived was a nicer town that had more to offer each of them in terms of night life, dining options, and cultural activities. Jack decided to move in with Molly, too, because her apartment was “nicer,” referring to his apartment as a “bachelor pad.” With a combined household income close to $150,000, the couple has far more income than expenses.

Jack was added to Molly’s apartment lease, but he did not break the lease at his apartment in the other town. Since he was starting to commute to work during the winter, he was afraid that the weather would take a turn for the worse, either stranding him at work or at home. His company had been laying off people over the holidays and he was afraid that being late even once would result in his pink slip coming up next. He never ended up needing the apartment over the winter, and it ended up being less costly to keep the apartment until the natural end of his lease in the coming months.

Many of Jack’s possessions still live at his old apartment. The only possession at his apartment that he values is his couch, which he spent a long time shopping for, and both Jack and Molly agree that his couch is far superior to her futon. The rest of the furniture, except for a spare bed in the guest room, all belongs to Molly. He brought a large red wok-style pan from his apartment at Molly’s request because she did not have a pan of that size available to her.

Molly does the majority of the grocery shopping. Since she lives in town, and Jack is commuting, she has a little more time at home than Jack does during the average work week. Jack will stop at Sam’s Club to pick up bulk items on his way home from work from time to time, usually once a week, because he has the membership to the bulk shopping club. He will typically purchase bottled water, juice, and sports drinks at the club for the both of them, and granola bars and boxed frozen pizza. However, for the everyday food items, Jack will only join

Molly on a shopping trip if it is on the weekends. Recently, Molly has been visiting the grocery store about three times a week.

They always eat breakfast from home; Jack favors a bagel and fruit (which Molly now prepares for him the night before so he can grab it on his way out the door) and Molly eats cereal. On the weekends, they use a special round stainless steel pan to bake tube cinnamon rolls as a special treat. Since they are both working professionals, during the week, their meals are eaten at work. Jack almost always gets Subway for lunch, and Molly orders takeout to be delivered at work. Sometimes, Molly will bring leftovers from home into work to reheat, but she is known in her workplace as the person who always tries to get everyone else to order takeout with her.

I caught Molly and Jack at a particular point of transition in their lives together as a couple. Jack had recently requested that they eat more dinner meals made at home. Until Molly met Jack, nearly every meal Molly ate was made in a restaurant, ordered as carry out and taken home to be eaten. Jack ate carry out with Molly for a majority of their relationship up until this point, but Jack expressed a desire to eat more food made at home. Since Jack commutes and gets home right around the time they like to eat dinner, Molly was left with the primary responsibility of shopping for and preparing evening meals.

Some nights, Molly does not want to cook and had work to do, and Jack comes home and wants to go to the gym to exercise, and she is still ordering food in about three weekday evenings a week and trying to cook more at home. On the weekends, they still like to eat out at restaurants for at least one meal, but they value the time they get to spend together on weekends and have taken up the routine of making what they call a special meal on the weekends.

Together, they come up with special meals that they can learn to cook together. Most recently, it was sushi one weekend, and lasagna the weekend before. They research a recipe, buy the ingredients, and make the meal together. The kitchen space has modern, higher-end stainless steel appliances (ceramic cooktop, bar, built in microwave, dishwasher) and can accommodate two people in the space at the same time. A box grater was needed for a more recent recipe so they went to the store and picked one out together and decided the best place to store it was in a little used drawer to the left of the dishwasher. Cooking together on the weekends is a way for Molly and Jack to spend time together creating something they can share.

However, during the week, Molly usually determines what it is that she wants to have for dinner, and her cravings and her dislike of opening herself up to the possibility of failure often dominate dinner time decision-making. Molly felt that Jack is somewhat of a perfectionist in navigating his world, and she has felt pressure to make sure that the food she makes is not just edible, but delicious. Molly talked about how, at the end of the day, she is tired and strapped for time, making cooking an issue of time, desire, and taste. To Molly, "a lot of the carry out food … just tastes so much better … I want something food for dinner tonight and anything I make here isn't, like, *good* good." Molly also noted that if Jack "were a jerk and you were like 'this is crummy, I'm not eating this'" then she "would probably be a lot less likely to experiment" with dinner time meals.

Jack felt he is easy going and admits that he is a perfectionist, but only when it comes to his own behaviors. He also claims that he will eat "whatever," and while he wants Molly to be satisfied with her dinners, carry out or home cooked, his attitude towards food is more along the lines of 'it's food, and I'm hungry.' Jack did not comment on Molly's tendencies towards orderliness, but to say that "Molly likes things a particular way, and I try not to cause any waves

and learn the system." Molly has commented on Jack's lack of attention to detail when it comes to him adapting to her household systems (sorting recycling, hanging up clothes according to color in the closet), but insists that he is free to do whatever works for him. In speaking with Jack and Molly, there seemed to be a bit of dissonance between what they were each saying about expectations and their observations of themselves and each other versus the subtext of what I was hearing and seeing.

Tara & Chad.

Tara and Chad have been dating for about two years and eight months. They first met at a computer conference and began dating long distance via the internet and Skype phone calls for about a year. Chad lived in the UK during the long distance phase of their relationship, and Tara went to England to visit Chad once, and he came to the US to visit Tara twice, and the both attended the conference they met at the year prior. After the conference, Chad decided that he wanted to return to the US to pursue a master's degree in a technology related field. Tara was finishing up her undergraduate degree when Chad made the decision to move back to the US, so their relationship became less long distance, as Chad had chosen a school that was approximately two and a half hours from Tara's hometown. Tara lived with several female roommates in the past, and lived with her parents over the summers. Since Chad was living somewhat close by, they began seeing each other a couple of times a month. After finishing her undergraduate degree, Tara decided that she wanted to pursue a master's degree as well, and moved in with Chad in August of 2012.

Living on graduate student stipends limited the types of housing Chad and Tara could afford. Chad was living in a studio apartment on campus that would not have accommodated Tara and her belongings very easily. Tara asked Chad to find them a place to live, since she was

not familiar with the town to which she was moving, so Chad selected a larger campus-run apartment nearby.

Tara's mother insisted that Chad and her daughter take many of the household items that were being stored in the family's basement to furnish their new apartment. At first, Chad viewed this act as something in which he would now be indebted to her family for, but soon realized that the household items were not given as gifts with strings attached, rather given to ensure the comfort of their daughter. Nearly every piece of furniture in the apartment belonged to Tara's family in the form of hand me downs. Tara's mother set up the house for them; Chad was not present when Tara moved into the apartment, and he had yet to move his belongings from his old apartment to the new apartment. Tara was content with her mother setting up the apartment, because it was one less thing she had to do. Chad also did not appear to mind Tara's mother's involvement for the same reasons, but had found that Tara's mother's setup of the kitchen was slightly problematic.

The freezer was full of Chinese re-heatable meals, made from scratch by Tara's mother, leaving no space for any other frozen items. Items used regularly by Chad were placed in cabinets behind less-used items, the rice cooker was left out on the countertop while his tea kettle was put away in favor for an electric hot water pot. As Chad became more aware of where kitchen items had been relocated, he made what he considered "small" or "minor" changes to get the kitchen in better working order for his own needs.

It took a bit of time for Chad to experience the kitchen as it was laid out, because Tara and Chad do not consider themselves meal planners. When asked if anyone in the household plans meals, both responded "no." Tara clarified to say that only when Chad wanted to cook a specific meal (her examples were steak or pasta) would there be any sort of planning. In

speaking with Chad and Tara, a routine for shopping, cooking, and eating did emerge, but it was clear that they both did not believe that their routine was a deliberate plan.

Tara and Chad sometimes go to the grocery store together, taking turns paying for the cart of groceries. When it is Tara's turn to pay, Chad believes that more snack items end up in the cart than actual meals; he often does not see how what Tara purchases could come together into any sort of meal. He typically ends up pushing the cart, while Tara selects items and places them in the cart. She admits that she "random buys" less when it is Chad's turn to pay. Both Tara and Chad agree that "if there's a meal to be made from scratch Chad might take the reins on that a little bit more" because Tara claims to enjoy cooking but needs to find foods that she's "comfortable" making, as in something she can make without "ruining" it. Chad disagrees with Tara's claim, stating that Tara should be more "honest" with her desires to cook and that she really struggles making something that she ends up wanting to eat when the meal is complete.

Tara comes from a Taiwanese family. Her parents came to the US as young adults; she and her sisters were all born and raised in the US. Tara's family is a major influence in her life. Chad is a citizen of the UK and immigrated to the US for school and to continue his relationship with Tara. They never really had a conversation about who would be responsible for household tasks. From their point of view, they each ended up doing what they didn't mind doing, and not doing what they didn't like doing. This has resulted in trash and recycling not being taken out for up to two weeks at a time, an argument during the interview about who does dishes more, and laundry washed but not folded or put away. In terms of their food lives, the lack of communication about domestic roles has also resulted in Tara and Chad eating different dinners at different times. Chad is content with reheating a can of soup while Tara reheats her mother's Chinese leftovers as each person becomes hungry.

Chad and Tara's kitchen space is galley style with one side of the galley being a cement wall. There is no dishwasher, a single basin shallow stainless steel sink, and an apartment-sized stovetop and oven. The apartment-sized refrigerator is actually located in the dining room area directly adjacent to the galley kitchen. A wobbly card table has been set up to extend the counter space and holds the microwave and electric kettle, but the card table is about 12 inches shorter than the countertop. If the dish drying rack is placed on the countertop, no counter top space remains. Directly behind the stovetop is the pantry, but it is impossible to open the pantry and stand at the stove at the same time. If both Tara and Chad were in the kitchen, one person would have to completely exit the working area for the other to pass through. The kitchen space is a constant source of frustration for Chad because his family's country home in England had six gas burners and ample space to move about. They both blame the kitchen for part of the reason why they do not feel a strong desire to cook; the other self-applied source of blame is laziness.

Erica & Nathan.

Erica and Nathan have been dating for about a year and six to seven months. Erica gave a month, day and year date when asked when the couple moved in together, and Nathan rounded to the month and year. They refer to each other as partners because they feel their relationship is "more than a boyfriend and girlfriend kind of relationship." They met online, a fact that Nathan was quite reluctant to talk about. I spoke to Erica first, and she prepared me for the fact that Jack was embarrassed that he had to "resort" to finding someone to date online, instead telling people that they met through mutual friends.

He shared that he was going to close his online dating account after his date with Erica, because he was tired of trying to navigate what he felt was an "artificial" way to interact with someone. He felt that his date with Erica was going to be a failure, as so many of his online-

arranged dates had been in the past, but both Erica and Jack said that their first date was a "success." When asked to speak more about their first date, the only details either of them would share individually or during their coupled interview was that they went to happy hour at a local restaurant, drank half priced martinis, and, when asked again what made it successful, Nathan and Erica shared coy smiles and stated, again, that they "had a successful first date."

Nathan was living in his parents' lake cottage about two hours away from the town in which Erica lived at the time. She is a librarian at a local university, and Nathan is a PhD student in the technology field. Nathan commuted into campus as needed, but mostly worked from his rent-free home. When Nathan and Erica met, she was living with an ex-boyfriend with whom she had previously ended their relationship and decided to live together as friends.

Since Nathan and Erica's first date was such a success, Nathan frequently came to Erica's shared apartment and stayed for extended weekends. The ex-boyfriend roommate did not take too kindly to this arrangement, so Erica and Nathan decided to move in together. They shopped for a rental house together; Erica had been living in what she referred to as a "box-style" apartment, meaning that all the apartments in the complex were the same and she was looking for something with more character. Nathan was initially skeptical about the house that Erica picked as her favorite because it was an older house, and while he agreed that it had lots of character and charm, he felt that it would be a nightmare in terms of heating and cooling because of its age. They also did not realize that the house was divided into two apartments; their unit was below, while the other unit was above. Nathan and Erica had long conversations about likes and dislikes, deal breakers and must-haves, walking distance and driving distance, and even though Nathan was not "crazy" about the house, he decided that it was not something to really debate about and he enjoyed that it made Erica happy.

They opted to purge many of their belongings and choose new furnishings together. Erica and Nathan enjoy shopping at auctions and spent the first few months living together going to auctions and finding interesting items to put into their home. When it came to setting up the kitchen, Erica brought many of her items with her, but Nathan left many items at his parents' lake house, because those items were meant for the lake house and did not belong to him. The few kitchen items he did bring reside in a drawer in the kitchen. Erica felt that Nathan didn't really have much of an opinion where items were placed in the kitchen, and he agreed, stating, "I got my drawer, with my stuff, so I can find it." Erica thought it was peculiar that Jack wanted his own kitchen drawer, and he told a story describing his childhood home and the way his parents arranged cooking utensils in an oversized crock in the middle of the kitchen counter stuffed to the brim with spatulas, spoons, and turners. He exclaimed that it was "ugly to look at" but "entirely functional," but with Erica's dislike of "things out on the counter… using up prime real estate that you need when you're cooking" he found logic in putting his stuff in his drawer.

Erica is not a confident cook. Nathan is far more comfortable in the kitchen, and Erica felt that he is the more experienced cook. Recently, Erica has taken on the cooking responsibilities because of Nathan's hectic school schedule. Since her job does not require her to take any work home, and she has a very set full time office schedule, they both feel that she has more time to shop for groceries and cook meals. Erica eats both breakfast and lunch at work, and typically has the same breakfast and lunch every day. Jack eats breakfast and lunch at home when he's working, but sometimes he will be on campus and purchase lunch with friends. Meal planning primarily occurs for dinner.

Nathan's view on food and eating is utilitarian; while he enjoys good food, he does not require good food. Food is fuel for his other activities, and if left to his own devices, he eats whatever is available to him. During our interview, he told a story about how, when living alone, he ate two pounds of carrots in one day because that was all he had in the refrigerator and was too busy and focused on work to think of anything else to eat. Since Erica has moved in, his behaviors have not changed, but his access to a variety of foods has changed. Nathan's philosophy is that if a food item is not brought into the house, it cannot be consumed. Erica expects a bag of potato chips to last a couple of weeks, but if Nathan is focused on a work binge, he will eat an entire bag of potato chips in one sitting. When Nathan was in charge of his own shopping, he would not purchase unhealthy food items and bring them home because he knew he "could not be trusted with such things."

At the beginning of their relationship, even when Nathan was staying for extended weekends at Erica's shared apartment, Nathan was the one who cooked all the time. Erica believes that Nathan took on the cooking duties to impress her, but Nathan believes that it's because Erica did not know how to cook. She agrees that she does not know how to cook, and believes that Nathan is a proper cook because he knows how to make many dishes without having to follow a recipe, "knows what goes together, and what proportions to use" whereas she needs to follow a recipe and have instructions. Erica felt that her cooking skills have increased since she moved in with Nathan, but her confidence has not increased. She is thankful that Nathan is positive about her cooking efforts. Nathan insists that "[Erica's] abilities exceed [her] confidence," but confesses that he would "eat damn near anything."

Nathan felt that he gets to cook when he wants to, and when he does not want to, Erica will cook. Erica, however, felt that if she did not cook, there would be no dinner. Nathan has a

tendency to forget to eat, resulting in dinnertime being extended until 10 or 11pm. Because of Erica's presence in Nathan's life, he felt he eats on a more regular schedule, which helps him structure his days with more ease.

Upon moving in together, Erica paid for the groceries, and Nathan paid for rent and utilities. Even though they make similar yearly salaries, Nathan took over paying for groceries because he has significantly more savings than Erica. Erica was concerned about saving money when shopping for groceries and would only shop at the big box grocery store and would skip the farmer's market or the local food co-op. In line with Nathan's viewing food as fuel, before meeting Erica, he only purchased groceries from the local food co-op or the farmer's market. Nathan felt that if he gave Erica a copy of his credit card, she might be more willing to go to the local food co-op for groceries rather than the big box grocery store. Erica hates having to go to more than one grocery store, but she tries to go to both stores, especially if Nathan requested something specific from the co-op.

Fred & Lissa.

Lissa and Fred met during a departmental Halloween party just less than two years ago. Lissa was very impressed with Fred's Captain Hook costume and told him so. Throughout the night, they kept running into each other, and at one point Lissa had to remove the ends of Fred's Captain Hook wig from her drink. At the party, Lissa commented on how awesome Fred's costume was to her friends, and her friends were very surprised that he and Lissa had never met, since they were studying in the same department. Fred was working on his PhD and Lissa was working on her master's degree. Fred and Lissa bumped into each other a few weeks after the party and decided to have coffee together, and Lissa learned that Fred's friends were equally as shocked that the two had not met before that night. At the time of the interview they had been

dating for a year and a half and had lived together for seven to ten months, and were engaged to be married in the upcoming summer months.

There was quite a bit of confusion as to what to tell me in terms of when they started living together. Lissa and Fred had lived together for one night before they each left for summer internships abroad: Lissa to Kenya and Fred to Washington D.C. Fred counted the beginning of the summer (10 months)as the time they started living together because all of her belongings were in his house before they parted ways for the summer. Lissa started the clock at seven months, because they returned from their trips within days of each other, and from the airport, immediately left for a wedding in California and a visit to Fred's parents in South Dakota for two weeks.

Even though they only lived together for a day before departing on their internship trips, Fred insisted that he and Lissa put their household together, at least in some respects, before they left. Fred sublet his house for the summer while they were gone, so he felt that it was important for the house to be in order for the tenant and for their own sanity upon their return. Lissa shared that, at the time, she was in no mood to set up the house, but upon returning to her new home, she was grateful that Fred had the foresight to encourage her to make his house their home.

Lissa previously lived about an hour away. Moving into Fred's house made the most sense to them since his home was in the town in which they both worked. Several of Fred's hand-me-down furniture items were relegated to the trash, and Lissa's nicer furniture took its place. A spare bedroom was set up as Lissa's storage room and office while they were away for the summer, and the room still has many of Lissa's belongings in it. Pictures of the couple are hanging in the house along with photos of places they have both visited, either together or independently, but the rule was that Lissa and Fred had to have been to the place featured in the

photograph for it to be hung in a common area. The couple sleeps in their bedroom, Lissa has her own room that she uses as a home office, guest bedroom, and clothes storage, and Fred uses the third bedroom as his office and their dog, Monty's, bedroom.

When Fred and Lissa actually began living together, they started noticing small changes to their routine, especially surrounding food-related domestic duties. Both Fred and Lissa plan meals. Fred works from home on some days, so he has easier access to the kitchen to work on dinner prep throughout the day, whereas Lissa worked an office job. At the time of the interview, Lissa had just given notice at her current job, and found herself daydreaming about what to do with the free time she would have until she found a new job after their wedding. It is Lissa's responsibility to shop for groceries, but if Fred is home, he will happily help her unload the car and put the food items away, glancing excitedly in the bags to see what kind of deals Lissa found at the grocery store. Lissa rarely checks the pantry, refrigerator or deep freezer to see what items they have stocked up. Over time, they developed a routine to know what items are needed on a weekly basis versus what items need to be purchased to make dinner items. She always goes grocery shopping on Saturdays, since she gets a discount at a local supermarket because of her work affiliation. Since Lissa does the grocery shopping and pays for the groceries, Fred pays for the mortgage.

When it comes to cooking, Lissa believes that Fred is the better cook, and likes for him to be in charge of preparing the main course of the meal. She calls herself his "sous chef" and enjoys preparing a fresh vegetable side dish and a salad for their meals. Fred loves to grill, in all kinds of weather, but Lissa has never used the grill. She also has a firm list of items she does not like, including onions, and has tried multiple times to like them but she does not like the taste or

the texture. If Fred would like onions in a dish, he will cook them separately and put them only on his portion of food. Lissa finds this to be very sweet and caring of him.

They always make time for Taco Thursday, which became a tradition upon moving in together. Fred comes from a family of hunters, and venison is always in the deep freezer. In an effort to find preparations of venison that would appeal to Lissa, they started having venison tacos every Thursday. When the venison ran out, they substituted ground beef, but tacos on Thursday became a tradition. Taco Thursday was also an effort to cut back on eating out at chain Mexican restaurant. When Lissa goes shopping for groceries on Saturday, she makes sure she has all the ingredients needed to have tacos on Thursday of the coming week.

Fred and Lissa enjoy cooking together because it allows them time in the evenings to spend working towards a common goal and unwinding from the day's trials. They both stated that they share the responsibility of cooking dinner, but if one person is especially busy or unavailable to help with dinner, the other will take over the responsibilities. They describe themselves frugal when it comes to food, but insist that frugal does not mean that what they eat is of a lower quality. When comparing themselves to their friends, they do not believe that their food is as fancy or time consuming as some of their single friends, but instead opt for simple, cost effective, and tasty options.

APPENDIX F: Survey Data Charts

Name	Lissa	Fred
Age	32	30
Relationship status	Partnered (engaged) Lissa thought a better title was fiancé because they are engaged, but that they were partners.	Boyfriend/girlfriend (engaged) Ed thought partners was reserved for same sex partners on the survey, so he didn't want to confuse his status with Lissa, but agreed that partners was an accurate title and that he liked it, but fiancé was the best descriptor of their relationship status.
Relationship length	1y5m	1y5m (6m crossed out)
When did you move in?	August 2012 (7 months) Lissa and Fred had a conversation about this because technically Lissa moved her belongings into the house at the beginning of the summer before she went to Africa for the summer and before Lissa left for an internship for the summer. They were living together, as in their belongings were sharing a space, but they were not physically sharing the space.	(~~10 months~~) 7 months---Fred counted the beginning of summer because that's when all their stuff was together. They haven't decided exactly when to count the first day, but for me they decided when they started physically sharing the space would be the best day to count living together for. Although, in the couple of days before they left for their trips, they did a LOT of the "where should this go?" conversations so that when they returned, they would come home to a house that was somewhat put together, and things were not all in boxes. Fred insisted that this be done even though Lissa was tired and she would have just left everything in boxes had she been moving from her house to another house just with herself.

Income	$35-50k	$15-24k
Does someone in the household plan meals?	Yes---both	Yes
Grocery shopping	Yes, I am this is how we have broken down budget responsibilities (I buy groceries, he pays mortgage)	Lissa
Grocery shopping-how often?	Once a week, Saturday typically	Once
Primary meal preparer	Yes-Fred, he's a better cook! But I help! We typically both are at least a bit involved	Yes, we share this responsibility
Breakfast at home (week)	1-2	1-2
Lunches at home (week)	6	6
Dinner meals prepared at home (week)	6	3-5
How often do you eat meals together?	Dinner: All Lunch: Few Breakfast: Few	Dinner: Most Lunch: Few Breakfast: Few-Never

Name	Tara	Chad
Age	24 (25 in June)	31
Relationship status	Girlfriend	boyfriend
When did you move in?	Beginning of fall semester 2012	Aug 2012
Relationship length	2y8m	3y8m
Income	Under $15k	Under $15k
Does someone in the household plan meals?	Circled No, crossed it out, and then circled Yes (they were sitting in the living room and filled this out at the same time—she never said anything to Chad while filling it out—she later explained that she didn't understand the question at first and explained further below) "Chad does sometimes usually when there is steak/pasta"	No
Grocery shopping	Yes, me, but Chad usually comes along	Yes, we go together, buying varies (as in who pays)
Grocery shopping-how often?	1 per week	Once/week usually unless there's something we particularly want
Primary meal preparer	Yes, Chad does more often if not busy (cook from scratch)	Yes, if pre made, Tara, if from scratch, me
Breakfast at home (week)	1-2 (her mother cooks a lot of Chinese food and they reheat it from the freezer, and she doesn't consider heating up stuff from the freezer or pantry cooking/preparing in the home)	6+

Lunches at home (week)	1-2	6+
Dinner meals prepared at home (week)	1-2	6+
How often do you eat meals together?	Dinner: Most Lunch: Some Breakfast: Few	Dinner: Most Lunch: Some Breakfast: Some

Name	Molly	Jack
Age	28	27
Relationship status	Girlfriend	boyfriend
When did you move in?	November (more vague, gave a month)	Thanksgiving (Jack gave a specific day)
Relationship length	1y3m –Molly and Jack discussed this in front of me, and asked if they were allowed to talk to each other while filling out the survey. There was a conversation about when to start counting to calculate the length of their relationship.	1y3m---They agreed that the first day they started dating was when they went to Vegas together
Income	$100,000 or higher	$50-75,000
Does someone in the household plan meals?	Yes, for 2-3 days, and there is a discussion about who wants what, I am responsible for meal planning because I usually do the grocery shopping but we often discuss it prior	Yes, holly does a majority of the grocery shopping. Meals are usually planned the night before or the day of the meal
Grocery shopping	Yes, me; Jack buys juice + sports drinks for us at Sam's Club because he has the membership	Molly does most o fthe grocery shopping. I will go with her on the weekends with input on what we might want or need for the week
Grocery shopping-how often?	3 days a week	Once or twice a week I have a membership to sam's club and I will go there as needed
Primary meal preparer	Me	Molly
Breakfast at home (week)	I make a bagel and fruit for Jack's breakfast every morning which he takes to work. On weekends we have cinnamon rolls together	6+

Lunches at home (week)	None during the week, rarely on weekends (1-2)	3-5
Dinner meals prepared at home (week)	3-5	3-5
How often do you eat meals together?	Lunch: Few (weekends) Breakfast: Few (weekends) Dinner: All	Lunch & Breakfast: Few (weekends) Dinner: All

Name	Nathan	Erica
Age	31	29
Relationship status:	Partnered	Partnered
Relationship length:	1y6m	1y7m
When did you move in?	6/11/12	June 2013 after about 9 months
Income	$25-35k	$25-35k
Does someone in the household plan meals?	No	Yes, 75% me, 25% nick
Grocery shopping	Yes, Erica	Me, this was a conversations/worked through issue
Grocery shopping-how often?	Once a week	2x a week
Primary meal preparer	Yes Both of us	Yes 75% me, 25% nick
Breakfast at home (week)	6	3-5 I eat cereal at work Nathan eats breakfast at home
Lunches at home (week)	6	3-5 (Erica typically makes a salad at home and brings it to work)
Dinner meals prepared at home (week)	6	3-5
How often do you eat meals together?	Dinner: Most Lunch: Few Breakfast: Few	Dinner: Most Lunch: Few Breakfast: Few

Another view:

	Molly	Jack	Chad	Tara	Nathan	Erica	Fred	Lissa
Type of relationship	Boyfriend/Girlfriend intentions to marry		Boyfriend/Girlfriend		Partners		Engaged—getting married this summer	
Length of relationship	16 months		Online dating 1 year with visits, same state with visits 1 y =2 y tot		1.5 years		October 2011 1.5 years	
How long living together	Thanksgiving 2012 3-4 months		August 2012 7 months		June 2012 (9 months)		May (1 week) Summer internships 7 months or 10 months	
Shopping	x			x		x		x
Put away food		x	x				x	
Use coupons	X (for takeout)							X (at grocery store)
Percentage eating out	80%		50%		20% *Nathan's eating out has increased since meeting/living with Erica		10%	
Primary cook	X		X			X	X	
Sous chef/help		X			One will help the other sometimes as each is available (timing of meal allows helpfulness)			X
Doesn't help with cooking				X				
Primary shop/cook	X					X		
Cooks together	On the weekends to spend time together doing an activity		Chad hates it when Tara is in the kitchen with him due to lack of space—physically no room to help		They both like to cook. Erica cooks because she has "more time" but Nathan will cook special things that she does not know how to cook. Nathan is the "better cook"		Fred usually has the plan, and takes the head chef approach. Lissa called herself the sous chef, and is primarily in charge of the vegetable or the salad, while Fred handles the main course/protein	
"Better cook" = more exp.	X		X		X		X	
	Molly	Jack	Chad	Tara	Nathan	Erica	Fred	Lissa
Ease of use of kitchen (as reported by participants)	100	100	0	0	70 (not enough work space)	70(not enough work space)	70(not enough work space)	70(not enough work space)
Working triangle	yes	yes	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
Kitchen type	Most modern kitchen—new stainless appliances		Newer appliances, but miniature versions		Older appliances, old cabinets and fixtures (rental)		Old, old house—there is a wood burning stove in the kitchen, and you have to wheel the dishwasher in from another room to use it	
The person with "more time" due to having a job with definitive hours	X—works set hours, comes home	*commutes 2 hours total each day, leaves at 6am.	Student-both have varied schedules	Student-both have varied schedules	Student-varied schedule/time at home =office time	X—works set hours, no work to bring home	Student, varied schedule	X—office job, no work to bring home

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EDUCATION

2008-Present **Ph.D. Candidate, Health Behavior**, Indiana University
Area(s): Health Education, Anthropology of Food, Virtual Food
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Dissertation Topic: *An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis Exploring the Foodwork Practices of Couples Adapting to a Shared Lifestyle*

2007 **M.S., School and College Health Programs**, Indiana University

GPA: 3.909/4.00; Area(s): Coordinated School Health Programs, College Health Education, School Food Environments, School Health Management

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Capstone Internship*: Brown County Public Schools: Enabling School Wellness Using the Healthy School Report Card*

2006 **B.S., Secondary Health Education**, Indiana University

GPA: 3.378/4.00; Minor: Human Sexuality

Student Teaching: *Bloomington High School South*

Field Experiences: *Edgewood High School, Shortridge Middle School*

HONORS AND AWARDS

2012 Recipient, Travel Grant-in-Aid $150
Applicant, Indiana University Credit Union Dissertation Year Fellowship (not funded)

2011 Recipient, Travel Grant-in-Aid $400
Recipient, School of HPER Fellowship Grant $2,000
Recipient, Office of Women's Affairs (OWA) Travel Grant. $100
Applicant, National Science Foundation SBE Doctoral Dissertation Grant: *The Role of Food in Constructing Identity Among Lesbian Women* (not funded)

2010 Recipient, JK Rash Scholarship $1,000
Recipient, Research Grant-in-Aid $996

2009 Recipient, School of HPER Fellowship Grant $1,088

2008 Recipient, Crane Fund for Widows and Children Scholarship $1000
Recipient, Donald J. Ludwig Scholarship $500

2007 Applicant, National Institutes of Health R03 Small Research Grant: *The Role of the School Food Service Director in Creating School Food Environments* (not funded)

EMPLOYMENT

2012 **Indiana University,** Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education
Instructor, Groups Summer Experience Program, Student Academic Center

Groups Student Support Services at Indiana University is a federally funded project that offers promising students from first generation college backgrounds the opportunity to pursue baccalaureate degrees at IU Bloomington. As part of this opportunity, students participate in an enriched summer "bridge" program between their high school senior and college freshman years, with courses in writing, mathematical problem solving, and critical reading and reasoning. *Selected text: George Ritzer, The McDonaldization of Society, 20th Anniversary Edition.*

2011-Present **Indiana University**, School of Informatics and Computing, Bloomington, IN

Research Assistant, NSF CreativeIT #IIS-1002772

Research includes qualitative studies of creative production in online craft and hobbyist communities (etsy.com).

2008-Present **Indiana University**, School of Public Health-Bloomington, Bloomington, IN

Associate Instructor, Department of Applied Health Science

Instructor of record for a variety of health-related undergraduate courses. *See Courses Taught for more information.*

2008 **Indiana University**, School of Public Health-Bloomington, Bloomington, IN
Research Assistant, Healthy School Report Card Evaluations

Collected and analyzed district-level data provided by school districts in Arkansas and Indiana using the Healthy School Report Card. Created an evaluation report for each school district comparing past and present data figures with a summary of actionable next steps to be taken in order to implement best practices for health and wellness from the classroom to district levels.

2007 **Indiana Prevention Resource Center**, Bloomington, IN
Research Assistant for NSSE and ATOD:ICA

Data collection and analysis of the annual Survey of Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use (ATOD) by Indiana Children and Adolescents. Prepared several sub-reports of findings for the yearly manuscript published for local and state agencies.

2003 **Indiana University Center for Survey Research (CSR)**, Bloomington, IN

Data Collection Representative

Trained in questionnaire design, sampling, interviewing, coding, and data entry specific to for telephone and paper-based interviews and surveys.

REFEREED JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS

2011 [J.1] **DeWitt, N**., Lohrmann, D.K., O'Neill, J., Clark, JK. (2011). A Qualitative Analysis of Success Stories from Michiana Coordinated School Health Leadership Institute Participants. *Journal of School Health*; 81(12), 727-32.

REFEREED RESEARCH & CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

2013 [R.7] Pace, T., **DeWitt, N.**, O'Donnell, K., Bardzell, J., and Bardzell, S. (Accepted, 2013) From Organizational to Community Creativity: Paragon Leadership & Creativity Stories at Etsy. *Proc. of the 2013 Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW)*. San Antonio, TX. Full Paper.

2012 [R.6] **DeWitt, N.** (2012) Food Identity Probes: An Interactive Approach to Exploring "Butch" Lesbian Identity. *Women in Science Program (WISP) Research Conference*; Indiana University. Poster.

2011 [R.5] **DeWitt, N**., Lohrmann, D.K. (2011) "I Don't Like Crumbs on My Keyboard": Eating Behaviors of World of Warcraft Players. *Proceedings of CHI'10: World Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems.* Poster.

[R.4] Pace, T. and **DeWitt, N**. (2011) Tasty Cupcakes Make You Happy: Exploring Virtual Food in HCI. *Proc. of the 2011 Conf. of the Association of Internet Research (AoIR)*. Seattle, WA. Presentation.

[R.3] **DeWitt, N.** (2011) The Role of Food in Constructing Identity. *8th International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry*. Presentation.

2010 [R.2] **DeWitt, N.** (2010). What is Romantic Food? A Phenomenological Account of Food and Intimacy. *Association for the Study of Food and Society Annual Meeting*. Presentation.

[R.1] **DeWitt, N.** (2010) Co-Creating Meaning: Collecting Food-Related Behaviors with Cultural Probes. American Public Health Association Annual Meeting, Poster.

WORKSHOPS/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

2012 [W.3] **DeWitt, N.** (2012) Food and Interaction Design: Virtual Food and Digital Cultures. In Comber, R., Ganglbauer, E., Choi, J., Hoonhout, J., Rogers, Y., O'Hara, K., and Maitland, J. Workshop on Food and Interaction Design. *Ext. Abs. of the 2012 ACM CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing*. Austin, TX.

[W.2] School Health Education-Higher Education Academy III. Co-sponsored by American Cancer Society/Centers for Disease Control-Division of Adolescent and School Health.

2011 [W.1] **DeWitt, N.** (2011) Exploration of Food Identity Practices in Couples Adapting to a Shared Lifestyle. *Food, Society and Sustainability: A Workshop for Indiana Researchers.*

TECHNICAL REPORTS

2008 [TR.2] Hamburger, M., Sullivan, P., Akers, S., Auer, M., DeJean, J., . . . **DeWitt, N**., . . Wanchic, F. (2008) Campus Sustainability Report. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Bloomington.

2007 [TR.1] Gassman, R., Jun, M. K., Samuel, S., Martin, E. V., Lee, J., . . **DeWitt, N. K**., . . Wells, T. J. (2007). Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use by Indiana Children and Adolescents: The Indiana Prevention Resource Center Survey – 2007. *IDAP Monograph No. 07-01. Indiana Prevention Resource Center, Bloomington IN.*

INVITED TALKS

2012 [IT.10] **DeWitt, N**. (2012) What is Consumer Health? *Indiana University Associate Instructor Training.* Guest Lecture. Indiana University.

[IT.9] **DeWitt, N**., Mack, A., Sanders, O. (2012) Strategies for Teaching Critical Reading Skills to Incoming College Freshmen. *Student Academic Center Groups Program*. Training Lecture. Indiana University.

[IT.8] **DeWitt, N.** (2012) Food Styling as a Misleading Advertising Ploy. *H315 Consumer Health*. Guest Lecture. Indiana University.

[IT.7] **DeWitt, N.** (2012) Mindless Eating: What Am I Eating and Why Am I Eating It? *N220 Nutrition for Health.* Guest Lecture. Indiana University.

2011 [IT.6] **DeWitt, N.** (2011) What Am I Eating and Why Am I Eating it? *H263 Personal Health*. Guest Lecture. Indiana University.

2010 [IT.5] **DeWitt, N.** (2010) What Am I Eating and Why Am I Eating It? *N221 Human Nutrition*. Guest Lecture. Indiana University.

2009 [IT.4] **DeWitt, N.** (2009) Developing Brand Loyalty through School Food Services. *H315 Consumer Health.* Guest Lecture. Indiana University.

[IT.3] **DeWitt, N.** (2009) Food in Popular Culture: Designing Courses for Undergraduate Students. *Collins Living Learning Center Board of Educational Programmers (BOEP).* Indiana University.

2008 [IT.2] **DeWitt, N**. (2008) Food and Advertising. *H263 Personal Health*. Guest Lecture. Indiana University.

2007 [IT.1] **DeWitt, N.,** McKinney, A. (2007) Wellness Booster: Being Physically Active While Attending Conferences. *MICHIANA Coordinated School Health Leadership Institute.* Radisson Hotel. Kalamazoo, MI.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Undergraduate Courses Taught	# Sections Taught	Average Enrollment	% Rated Instructor Outstanding
X153: Critical Reading & Reasoning for New College Students	1	25	100
H205 Introduction to Health Education	5	20	100
F255 Human Sexuality	1	20	n/a
H263 Personal Health	1	100	96
H315 Consumer Health	2	60	92
H352 Secondary School Health Curriculum and Teaching Strategies	1	25	91
H353 Field Experience in Secondary Health Education	1	18	n/a
H452 Secondary School Health Instruction and Assessment	2	25	Current course
H453 Microteaching Lab in Health Education	6	8	100
H464 Coordinated School Health Programs	2	45	88

Associate Instructor, X153: Critical Reading & Reasoning for New College Students
Indiana University, Student Academic Center: Summer Groups Program

Provides a fast-paced curriculum organized around the reading of a trade book (Ritzer's *The McDonaldization of Society*) like those assigned in freshman year courses. The curriculum includes critical reading, use of argument structure as a reading and writing tool, and concept development. Students also learn fundamental study skills.

Summer 2012: # Students: 21/21; Outstanding Course 100%: Outstanding Instructor: 100%
What did you like most about the course and/or instructor?

- "She gave clear instructions for every assignment."
- "She encouraged us to speak up and voice and justify our opinions."
- "My instructor was very outgoing, hard-working, and she loved her job. Coming prepared every day with something to learn was Natalie's #1 goal and she succeeded."

Associate Instructor, H205: Introduction to Health Education
Indiana University, School of Public Health-Bloomington

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the profession of health education. Topics addressed in the course include historical perspectives, practice settings, career opportunities, professional ethics, trends, and current issues. Emphasis will also be placed on the relationship between community and school health.

Spring 2010: # Students: 12/21; Outstanding Course: 92% Outstanding Instructor: 100%
What did you like most about the course and/or instructor?

- "I learned a lot of valuable info, but I was hoping to learn more about health careers with our degrees."
- "I hope I can take another class from her."
- "Very open and willing to speak with you."

Associate Instructor, H263: Personal Health
Indiana University, School of Public Health-Bloomington

This survey course provides a theoretical and practical treatment of the concepts of disease prevention and health promotion. Covers such topics as emotional health; aging and death; alcohol, tobacco, and drug abuse; physical fitness; nutrition and dieting; consumer health; chronic and communicable diseases; safety; and environmental health.

Fall 2009: # Students: 82/100; Outstanding Course: 93%; Outstanding Instructor: 96%
What did you like most about the course and/or instructor?

- "Her passion was felt with many of the topics we covered. Assignments/projects were fun and interesting."
- "I absolutely loved that you had videos and fill in the black lectures that kept me focused. You were always passionate and energetic, fair, but sweet."
- "I liked the enthusiasm and excitement when teaching."
- "When I needed help or was concerned about a grade she was very helpful."

Associate Instructor, H315: Consumer Health
Indiana University, School of Public Health-Bloomington

Provides students with (1) a model for making informed consumer health related decisions; (2) current information involving informed decisions; (3) mechanisms for continued consumer awareness and protection.

Spring 2011: # Students: 38/60; Outstanding Course: 90%; Outstanding Instructor: 92%
What did you like most about the course and/or instructor?

- "I enjoyed this instructor a lot because she was very knowledgeable and friendly."
- "I love her attitude, her presentation, and her class structure."
- "Natalie has a great teaching style that promotes an environment of respect for all and brings humor also, which we all know can facilitate the learning process by increasing memory."
- "She really enjoys what she teaches and it shows. She made the class interesting and fun. I also liked the fact that we wrote papers and had projects instead of tests."

Associate Instructor, H352: Secondary School Health Curriculum and Instruction
Indiana University, School of Public Health-Bloomington

Professional competencies for planning and implementing secondary school curricula based on assessed needs. Effective curriculum characteristics, content standards, instructional strategies, curriculum analysis, lesson and unit structures. Preparation of lesson and unit plans. Part I of a 2-semester pedagogical requirement for students in the teacher education program.

Spring 2012: # Students: 12/16; Outstanding Course: 83%; Outstanding Instructor: 91%
What did you like most about the course and/or instructor?

- "She was very respectful and enthusiastic and is extremely helpful to the students."
- "I liked the project-based activities."
- "This course was extremely valuable and useful for me professionally."

Associate Instructor, H353: Field Experience in Secondary Health Education
Indiana University, School of Public Health-Bloomington

Observation and limited participation in a secondary school with a designated health teacher for a minimum of 20 hours. Students compile logs and summaries of their experiences. (not evaluated)

Associate Instructor, H452: Secondary School Health Instruction and Assessment
Indiana University, School of Public Health-Bloomington

Professional competencies related to classroom management, managing controversy, assessment and course planning. Analysis and demonstration of proven curricula. Skill development in assessment tool development and curriculum planning. Part II of a 2-semester pedagogical requirement for students in the teacher education program. (current course)

Associate Instructor, H453: Microteaching Lab in Health Education
Indiana University, School of Public Health-Bloomington

Application of professional competencies through presentation of secondary-level lesson segments and complete lessons. Emphasis on use of active-learner teaching strategies. Student presentations are recorded and critiqued.

Spring 2010: # Students: 4/6; Outstanding Course: 100%; Outstanding Instructor: 100%
What did you like most about the course and/or instructor?

- "Natalie is enthusiastic about teaching this course."
- "The course is well organized and she is always prepared for class meetings."
- "Natalie was very effective in her teaching approach. I wish I would have had the opportunity to learn from her in more classes. Very knowledgeable of what teaching really looks like in the classroom."

Associate Instructor, H464: Coordinated School Health Programs
Indiana University, School of Public Health-Bloomington

Focuses on the coordinated school health program (CSHP) model components, and coordination. Includes the relationship of CSHP to health and education policy. Emphasis on practical application of organizational principles and school health strategies for addressing current student and staff health issues. Includes both elementary and secondary education students.

Spring 2012: # Students: 25/26; Outstanding Course: 80%; Outstanding Instructor: 88%

What did you like most about the course and/or instructor?

- "The variety of material was nice and the different ways information was presented was helpful."
- "Natalie is a great teacher and seemed very confident in the material she is teaching. Highly recommend the course and the instructor."
- "She applies real life experience to the material and course work. She is fun and enthusiastic.
- "Natalie was an awesome person that is very knowledgeable. She is patient and works with students. This is the kind of professor I would want to be. Thank you for the experience."

COURSE DESIGN

X300: Food In Popular Culture. Original course designed for Collins Living-Learning Center (LLC). Submitted to the Board of Education Programming (BOEP) in Collins LLC, 2010. (proposed)

This course provides students with the ability to think critically about their everyday lives through the lens of food and its uses and representations in popular culture. Students engage in critical thinking and problem solving skills by using food to engage in four essential structures: how to study food in popular culture, the role of food in American pop culture, the role of food in world pop culture, and the examination of food through case studies (in television and film). This course teaches students a structure by which to critically analyze and evaluate any topic, using an interesting and thought-provoking subject as an example.

H315: Consumer Health. Updated course in 2012 for the Department of Applied Health Science, School of Public Health-Bloomington.

In the age of digital communication and information accessing, it is important to enable consumers to make intelligent decisions about the purchase and use of health products and services. This course was updated to include up to date information about health care in America, changes to health insurance under the Obama Administration, potential issues surrounding online health-related purchases, sections on complementary and alternative medicine, and materials and activities for food and consumerism.

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES AND SERVICE

Funding Reviewer	Indiana University Graduate Professional Student Org.: Travel Grants, 2011-12
	Indiana University Graduate Professional Student Org.: Research Grants, 2011-12
Reviewer	ACM Conf. on Human Factors in Computing (CHI), 2009-2012
	ACM Conf. on Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW), 2011-2012
	Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR), 2011-2012
	American Public Health Association (APHA), Food and Nutrition, 2010-2011
	Student Submission. Eta Sigma Gamma Monograph, 2006
Pedagogy	Leader, New Associate Instructor Training, School of Public Health-Bloomington, 2012
	Mentor, MPH Students
Student Volunteer	ACM Conference on Human Factors in Computing (CHI), 2009-2012
	Association for the Study of Food and Society (ASFS), 2010
	MICHIANA Coordinated School Health Leadership Institute
Conference Planning	Events Coordinator, Association for the Study of Food and Society, 2010
Service at Indiana University	Member, Graduate and Professional Student Organization, 2008-2010
	Member, IU Sustainability Task Force, Food Sustainability Working Group, 2007
	Member, School and Community Health Promotion Steering Committee, 2006

Senior Leader, Consumer Health Instructors, 2012

Member, School of Education Teacher Education Program (TEP), 2004

Professional Memberships

Association of Computing Machinery, (ACM) 2008-Present

Association for the Study of Food and Society, 2008-Present

American School Health Association, 2008-Present

American Public Health Association, 2008-Present

Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR), 2010-Present

Eta Sigma Gamma-Nu Chapter, 2007-present

National Forensic League, Level of Distinction-Ruby, 1997-Present

STUDENT MENTORSHIP

2012 Graduate Assistants Oversight, Department of Applied Health Science, School of Public Health-Bloomington.

- Assisting international PhD students during their first year teaching through teaching observations, evaluations, pedagogy workshops, and teaching strategy discussions.

White, J. (2012) Food Allergies to Foodies. Graduate Capstone Project. School of Informatics and Computing: Indiana University.

2011 Wang, X. (2011) Designing for Urban Sustainability and Health Living: HCI and Food Safety of Guangzhou, China. Graduate Capstone Project. School of Informatics and Computing: Indiana University.

Toombs, A., Gross, S., Walorski, K., Wain, J. (2011) Foodmunity. CHI 2011 Student Design Competition. Indiana University. 2nd place winners.

REFERENCES

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Additional references available upon request.